

the life of
HENRI BRULARD



by
STENDHAL

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(HENRI BEYLE)

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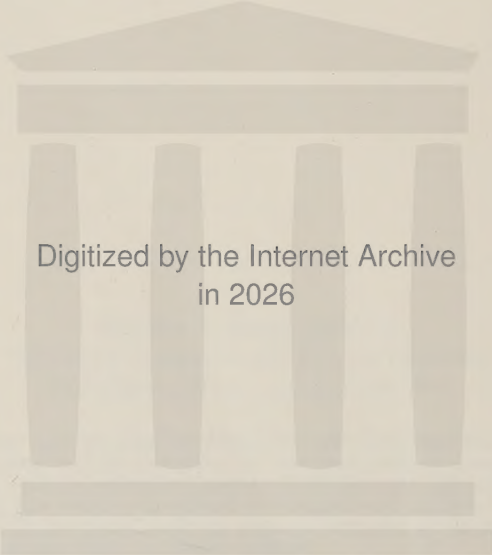
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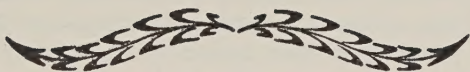
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CHAPTER I

I found myself this morning, the 16th of October 1832, at San Pietro in Montorio, on the Janiculum, at Rome. There was a splendid sun; a light and almost imperceptible sirocco was wafting a few little white clouds over the Alban Mount; the air was full of delightful warmth; I was glad to be alive. I clearly made out Frascati and Castle Gandolfo, which are four leagues from here, and the Villa Aldobrandini, where there is the sublime fresco of Judith by Domenichino. I can see perfectly the white wall marking the repairs finally effected by Prince F. Borghese, the same whom I saw at Wagram as colonel of the Cuirassier regiment the day my friend M. de M—— had his leg shot away. Much farther off I perceive the rock of Palestrina and the white masonry of Castle San Pietro, which was once its citadel. Below the wall against which I am leaning are the great orange trees of the Cappucini garden, then the Tiber and the Priory of Malta, and a little beyond, to the right, the tomb of Cecilia Metella, San Paolo, and the Pyramid of Cestius. Facing me I see Santa Maria Maggiore and the long lines of the Palace of Monte-Cavallo. All ancient and modern Rome, from the old Appian Way, with its ruined tombs and aqueducts, to the magnificent gardens of the Pincio, laid out by the French, lies unfolded to the view.

This place, I said to myself, musing, has not its like in the world; and, do what I would, the old Rome prevailed over the modern; all my memories of Livy came thronging back to me. To the left of the convent, on the Alban Mount, I perceived the Fields of Hannibal.

What a splendid view! It is here, then, that Raphael's

Transfiguration was admired for two and a half centuries. How different from the dismal gallery of gray marble where it is now buried in the depths of the Vatican! And so for two hundred and fifty years that masterpiece was here, two hundred and fifty years! . . .

Ah! in three months' time I shall be fifty. Is it really possible? 1783, '93, 1803, I count it all over on my fingers . . . and 1833, fifty. Is it really possible! Fifty! I am going to turn fifty. And I sang the air by Grétry: "When a man is fifty years old."

This unexpected discovery did not annoy me, I had just meditated on Hannibal and the Romans. Greater men than I are dead and gone! . . . After all, I said to myself, I have not filled up my life badly. Filled up! Ah! I mean to say that chance has not given me too many misfortunes, for can I in the least be said to have directed my life?

And to be on the point of falling in love with Mlle de Grisheim! What could I hope from a young lady of noble family, the daughter of a general in favor two months before the Battle of Jena! Brichaud was quite right when he said to me, in his usual cynical way: "When a man loves a woman, he says to himself: 'What do I want to do with her?'"

I sat down on the steps of San Pietro, and there I mused for an hour or two on this idea: I shall soon be fifty, it is high time that I got to know myself. What I have been, what I am, I should really find it hard to say.

I am taken for a very witty and unfeeling man, a Lovelace even, and I see that I have spent most of my time in unhappy love-affairs. I was madly in love with Mlle Kably, Mlle de Grisheim, Mme de Diphortz, Métilde, and I never possessed them; and several of these loves lasted for three or four years. Métilde entirely filled my life from 1818 to 1824. And I am not yet cured, I added, after dreaming for a good quarter of an hour, perhaps, of nothing but her. Did she love me?

My heart was deeply touched and moved to prayer and ecstasy. And Menti, in what grief was I plunged when she left me! At this point I shivered at the thought of the 15th of September 1826 at San Remo, on my return from England. What a year I spent from the 15th of September 1826 to the 15th of September 1827! On the day of this dread anniversary I was at the island of Ischia. And I noticed a distinct improvement: instead of letting my thoughts dwell directly on my unhappiness, as I had done some months before, I now thought only of the memory of the wretched state into which I had sunk, for instance, in October 1826. This observation consoled me greatly.

What have I really been, then? I shall never know. To what friend, however enlightened he may be, can I appeal? M. di Fiore himself could not give me an opinion. To what friend have I ever spoken a word about the sorrow love has caused me?

And it is a singular and most unfortunate fact, I said to myself this morning, but my victories (as I used to call them then, my head being full of military matters) did not bring me a pleasure even half as great as the deep sorrow caused me by my defeats.

The amazing victory over Menti did not give me a pleasure comparable to the hundredth part of the pain which she gave me by leaving me for M. de Bospier.

Was it that I had a depressing personality? . . . And here, as I could not tell what to say, I began again, without thinking, to admire the sublime aspect of the ruins of Rome and its modern grandeur: opposite me the Coliseum; and, beneath my feet, the Farnese Palace, with its beautiful arcaded loggia full of modern works; the Corsini Palace, too, beneath my feet.

Have I been a clever man? Have I had any talent for anything? M. Daru¹ used to say that I was crassly igno-

¹ M. Daru: Stendhal's cousin, the Count Daru, who, as chief commissary of war, organized Masséna's Army of Switzerland

rant; yes, but it was Besançon² who told me this, and the gaiety of my character made Besançon, that morose ex-secretary-general, very jealous. But was my character gay?

In the end I did not come down from the Janiculum until the light evening mist warned me that I should soon be overtaken by that nasty, unhealthy cold which falls suddenly the moment after sundown in this country. I hurried back to the Palazzo Conti (Piazza Minerva). I felt harassed. I was wearing a pair of white trousers of an English stuff; and I wrote inside, on the band: "16 October 1832, I am going to be fifty," contracted like this, so that it should not be understood: Imgo ingt obef if ty.

In the evening, on returning rather bored from the ambassador's reception, I said to myself: I ought to write my life; then perhaps, at last, when it is finished, I should know what I have been, whether gay or sad, a clever man or a fool, brave or timid; and finally, whether the sum total be happy or unhappy, I shall be able to make di Fiore read this manuscript.

The idea is inviting. Yes, but that frightful quantity of *I's* and *me's*! They would be enough to put the most kind-hearted reader into a bad temper. With these *I's* and *me's* it would be, allowing for the difference of talent, like M. de Chateaubriand, that king of egotists. *De je mis avec moi tu fais la récidive.*³ I say this line to myself every time I read a page of his. One might, it is true, use the third person in writing; *he* did, *he* said; yes, but then how record the inner movements of the

in 1799, the Army of Reserve for North Italy, and, after 1803, Napoleon's Grand Army. In 1811 he became Secretary of State; in 1813, Minister for War. In Ch. XXXVI and following, Stendhal gives his impressions of Daru and his family.

² Besançon: his friend the Baron de Mareste, so nicknamed by Stendhal because he had been secretary-general of the prefecture of Doubs, the chief town of which is Besançon.

³ "Backsliding once again, you join the *I's* and *me's*."

soul? It is on this point especially that I should like to consult di Fiore.

I do not resume till the 23rd of November 1835. This same idea of writing my life came to me lately during my journey to Ravenna; to tell the truth, I have had it in mind many times since 1832, but I have always been discouraged by that terrible difficulty of the *I's* and *me's* which will make the author odious; I do not feel that I have enough talent to get round it. To tell the truth, I am anything but sure that I have enough talent to be read. I sometimes find great pleasure in writing, that is all.

If there is another world, I shall not fail to go and see Montesquieu; if he says to me: "My poor fellow, you had no talent whatsoever," I shall be annoyed, but not at all surprised. I often feel this: what eye can see itself? It is less than three years since I discovered the wherefore of this.

I can see clearly that many writers who enjoy a great reputation are detestable. What it would be a blasphemy to say today of M. de Chateaubriand (a sort of Balzac) will be a truism in 1880. I have never changed my opinion of this Balzac; when it appeared, toward 1803, Chateaubriand's *Génie* seemed to me ridiculous. But is feeling the faults of another the same thing as possessing talent? I notice that the worst painters see each other's faults very well: M. Ingres is quite right in what he says against M. Gros, and M. Gros against M. Ingres (I choose those who will perhaps still be talked about in 1935).

Such are the arguments which reassured me with regard to these Memoirs. Suppose that I go on with this manuscript and that once it is written I do not burn it; I shall leave it, not to a friend, who might become a religious fanatic, or sell himself to a party, like that young dupe Thomas Moore. I will leave it to a bookseller, to M. Levavas seur for instance (Place Vendôme, Paris):

Very well, then, here is our bookseller who, after my death, receives a great bound volume of this vile writing. He will have a little of it copied, and will read it; if it strikes him as boring, if M. de Stendhal is no longer heard of, he will leave the rigmarole alone, and it will be found again perhaps two hundred years later, like the memoirs of Benvenuto Cellini.

If he prints it and it bores people, it will be talked about thirty years after just as the poem *La Navigation*, by that spy Esménard, which was so often the subject of conversation at M. Daru's luncheons in 1802, is talked about now. And even that spy was, as it seems to me, the censor or director of all the newspapers, which puffed him outrageously every week. He was the Salvandy⁴ of his time, even more impudent, if possible, but with far more ideas.

So my Confessions will have ceased to exist thirty years after they are printed, if the *I's* and *me's* bore my readers too much; and yet I shall have had the pleasure of writing them, and of making a thorough examination of my conscience. . . . Moreover, if they are a success, I stand the chance of being read in 1900 by such spirits as I love, the Mme Rolands, the Mélanie Guilberts, the . . .⁵

For instance, today, the 24th of November 1835, I have just got back from the Sistine Chapel, where I did not enjoy myself at all, though I was provided with a good glass for seeing the vault and Michelangelo's *Last Judgment*; but I had committed an excess in coffee-drinking at the Caetanis' the day before yesterday (it was the fault of a machine brought from London by Michelangelo Caetani), and this had given me neural-

⁴ Salvandy: a moderate liberal publicist who served the Duc Decazes, Louis XVIII's liberal minister, and after 1830 became a conservative minister under Louis Philippe. Stendhal's objection to him and his literary style is no doubt chiefly due to political reasons.

⁵ Unfinished in the original French.

gia. The machine was too perfect. This too excellent coffee was a bill of exchange drawn on my future happiness in favor of the present moment; it has brought back my old neuralgia, and I have been to the Sistine Chapel like a sheep, *id est*, with no pleasure: my imagination could not once spread its wings. I admired the gold brocade drapery painted in fresco at the side of the throne, I mean to say the Pope's great walnut armchair. This drapery bears the name of Sixtus IV, Pope (*Sixtus IIII, Papa*), and one could touch it with one's hand. It is two feet from one's eyes, and still produces an illusion after three hundred and fifty-four years.

Being no good for anything, not even for writing the official letters which are my professional duty, I have had a fire lit, and I am writing this, I hope without lying, with no illusions about myself, but with pleasure, like a letter to a friend. What will this friend's ideas be in 1880? How different from ours! Today these two ideas: *the most rascally of kings* and *hypocritical Tartar*, applied to two names which I dare not write,⁶ would be, in the eyes of three quarters of my acquaintances, an enormous imprudence, an enormity.

In 1880 these judgments will be truisms which even the Kératrys of the age will no longer dare to repeat. This is something new for me; to talk to people whose cast of mind, species of education, prejudices, and religion are totally unknown to one. What an encouragement to be truthful, and simply truthful!—that is the only thing that lasts. Benvenuto was truthful, and one follows him with pleasure, as if he had written yesterday; whereas one skips the pages of that Jesuit Marmon- tel, although he takes every possible pains not to offend, like a regular Academician. At Leghorn I refused to buy

⁶ "*The most rascally of kings* and *hypocritical Tartar*": Louis Philippe and Nicholas I of Russia. As a servant and admirer of Napoleon, Stendhal hated Louis Philippe; Nicholas I he hated as the "tyrant" who was responsible for crushing the liberties of Poland (see Ch. IX, p. 86).

his *Memoirs*, at twenty sous a volume—I who adore that kind of writing.

But how many precautions are necessary to prevent oneself from lying!

For instance, at the beginning of the first chapter there is something which may seem like tall talk. No, reader, I was not a soldier at Wagram in 1809.

You must know that forty-five years before your time it was the fashion to have been a soldier under Napoleon. So today, in 1835, it is a lie quite worth writing if one gives it to be understood indirectly, and without an absolute lie (in the manner of the Jesuits), that one was a soldier at Wagram.

The fact is that I was quartermaster and sub-lieutenant in the 6th Dragoons when this regiment arrived in Italy in May 1800, I believe; and that I resigned my commission at the time of the short peace of 1803.⁷ I was bored to death with my fellow officers, and thought nothing could be so pleasant as to live in Paris like a philosopher (that was the phrase I used to use to myself then), on the hundred and fifty francs a month which my father gave me. I supposed that after his death I should have twice as much, or double that again; with the passion for knowledge which then burned within me, it was far too much.

I did not become a colonel, as I should have done with the powerful protection of the Comte Daru, my cousin; but I have been much happier, I think. I soon gave up thinking about studying and imitating M. de Turenne; this idea had been my unvarying aim during the three years that I was a dragoon. It was sometimes rivaled by another: to write comedies like Molière and live with an actress. At that time I had already an invincible aversion from respectable women and the hypocrisy which they

⁷ "The short peace": the Peace of Amiens, concluded between Napoleon and Great Britain in March 1802; it lasted till May 1803.

find indispensable. My colossal laziness won the day. Once in Paris, I passed six whole months without visiting my family (the Messieurs Daru, Mme Le Brun, M. and Mme de Baure); every day I would say: "Tomorrow." I passed two years like this, on the fifth floor of a house in the rue d'Angiviller, with a fine view of the colonnade of the Louvre, reading La Bruyère, Montaigne and J.-J. Rousseau, whose turgidity soon offended me. It is here that my character was formed. I also read the tragedies of Alfieri a great deal, forcing myself to take pleasure in them. I revered Cabanis, Tracy, and J.-B. Say; I often read Cabanis, whose vague style distressed me. I lived, as solitary and mad as a Spaniard, a thousand miles away from real life. The good Father Jeki, an Irishman, gave me lessons in English, but I made no progress; I was madly enthusiastic about *Hamlet*.

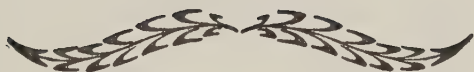
But I am letting myself be carried away, I am wandering from the point, I shall be unintelligible if I do not follow the sequence of time; and, besides, the circumstances will not come back to me so well.

Well, then, at Wagram in 1809 I was not a soldier, but, on the contrary, an assistant to the Commissaries of War, a position in which my cousin M. Daru had placed me, so as to "remove me from vice," to use the expression of my family. For my solitude in the rue D'Angiviller had ended in living at Marseilles for a year with a charming actress, a woman of superior feelings, to whom I never gave a penny.

In the first place, for the capital reason that my father still gave me a hundred and fifty francs a month, on which I had to live, and at Marseilles, in 1805, this allowance was very irregularly paid.

But I am wandering from the point again. In October 1806, after Jena, I was assistant to the Commissaries of War, a position scorned by the soldiers; in 1810, on August 3, I became a minor official, an "auditor," of the

Council of State, and a few days later inspector-general of the Crown Furnishing Department. I was in favor, not with the master (Napoleon did not talk to madmen like me), but I was highly approved by that best of men the Duke of Friuli (Duroc). But I am wandering from the point.



CHAPTER II

I fell with Napoleon in April 1814. I came to Italy to live as I had done in the rue D'Angiviller. In 1821 I left Milan with despair in my soul, on account of Métilde, and thinking seriously of blowing out my brains. At first everything bored me in Paris; later on, I wrote to distract my mind. Métilde died, so it was useless to return to Milan. I had become perfectly happy; that is saying too much—but, at any rate, quite passably happy—in 1830, when I wrote *Le Rouge et le Noir*.

I was overjoyed at the July Days.¹ I saw the firing under the colonnade of the Théâtre-Français, with very little danger to myself. I shall never forget that fine sunny day, and my first sight of the tricolor flag, on the 29th or 30th, toward eight o'clock, after sleeping in the house of Commander Pinto, whose niece was frightened. On the 25th of September I was appointed consul at Trieste by M. Molé,² whom I had never seen. From Trieste I came in 1831 to Cività-Vecchia and Rome, where I am still, and where I am bored for lack of the opportunity to exchange ideas with anyone. From time to time I feel the need of conversation in the evening with intelligent people, and in the absence of this I feel as if I were stifled.

Such, then, are the main divisions of my story: born

¹ July Days: the revolution of July 1830, which excluded from the throne Charles X, the last legitimate King of France, and placed on the throne Louis Philippe, with the parliamentary title of "King of the French."

² Molé: Minister for Foreign Affairs during the early months of Louis Philippe's reign, and later Prime Minister, 1836-9.

in 1783, a dragoon in 1800, a student from 1803 to 1806. In 1806 assistant to the Commissaries of War, and commissariat officer at Brunswick. In 1809 making returns of the wounded at Essling or Wagram, going on missions along the Danube, on its snow-covered banks, at Linz and Passau, in love with Mme Petit, and, in order to see her, asking to go to Spain. On the 3rd of August 1810, appointed by her (it amounted to that) to a minor position in the Council of State. This life of high favor and expense brings me to Moscow, makes me commissariat officer at Sagan, in Silesia, and causes my fall in April 1814. Would anyone believe it? To me, personally, my fall was a pleasure.

After my fall³ I was a student, a writer, madly in love, publishing my *History of Painting in Italy* in 1817; my father becomes an Ultra,⁴ is ruined, and dies in 1819, I believe; I return to Paris in June 1821. I am in despair on account of Métilde; she dies, I had rather she were dead than unfaithful, I write, it consoles me, I am happy. In 1830, in September, I return to the administrative career in which I am still occupied, regretting my life as a writer on the third floor of the Hôtel de Valois, No. 71 rue de Richelieu.

I have been a wit since the winter of 1826; before that I was silent out of laziness. I am taken, I believe, for the gayest and most unfeeling of men; it is true that I have never said a single word about the women I have loved. In this respect I have experienced all the symptoms of the melancholy temperament described by Cabanis.⁵ I have had very little success.

³ "My fall in April 1814": at the abdication of Napoleon, which took place April 11, 1814, after the Allies had entered Paris.

⁴ Ultra: the name given to the extreme reactionary party in the *Chambre introuvable* after the restoration of Louis XVIII, because they were "more royalist than the King"; they were violently Catholic, and identified the interests of "the altar and the throne."

⁵ Cabanis (1757-1808): French physiologist, whose treatise on the *Relations between the Physical and Moral Nature of Man*

But the other day, musing about life on the solitary road above the Alban Lake, I found that my life could be summed up by the following names, whose initials I wrote in the dust, like *Zadig*, with my stick, seated on the little bench behind the stations of the Calvary of the *Minori Menzati*, erected by the brother of Urban VIII, Barberini, beside those two beautiful trees enclosed by a little round wall:

Virginie (Kably), Angela (Pietragrúa), Adèle (Rebuffel), Mélanie (Guilbert), Mina (de Grisheim), Alexandrine (Petit), Angelina, whom I never loved (Bereyter), Angela (Pietragrúa), Métilde (Dembowski), Clémentine, Giulia. And finally, for a month at most, Mme Azur, whose Christian name I have forgotten, and yesterday, imprudently, Amalia (B.).

Most of these charming creatures did not honor me with their favors; but they have literally filled my life. After them came my works. In reality I have not been ambitious, but in 1811 I thought myself ambitious.

The habitual state of my life has been that of an unsuccessful lover, fond of music and painting—I mean to say, enjoying the productions of these arts but not practicing them unskillfully. I have sought with an exquisite sensibility the sight of beautiful landscapes; it is with that one aim that I have traveled. The landscapes were like a bow which played upon my soul; and views mentioned by nobody, the line of rocks on the way to Arbois, I think, as one approaches it from Dôle by the high road, are for me a tangible and obvious image of the soul of Métilde. I see that dreaming is what I have preferred to everything, even to a reputation for wit. It was only in 1826 that I took enough trouble to assume the profession of improvising in dialogue for the benefit of the society in which I happened to be; and it was because of the despair in which I had passed the first months of that fatal year.

expounds a materialist philosophy which had considerable influence at the time when Stendhal was young.

I learned lately, by reading it in a book (the letters of Victor Jacquemont, the Indian explorer), that it had been possible for someone to think me brilliant. A few years before, I had seen almost the same thing in a book by Lady Morgan, which was then the fashion. I had forgotten this fine quality, which has made me so many enemies. (It was perhaps only the appearance of this quality, and the enemies were people too common to be judges of what was brilliant; for instance, how can a man like the Comte d'Argout be a judge of brilliancy? A man whose happiness lies in reading two or three duodecimo volumes every day of some novel written for housemaids. How should M. de Lamartine be a judge of wit? In the first place, he has none, and in the second place, he too devours two volumes a day of the dullest works. Saw him at Florence in 1824 or 1826.)

The great drawback of being clever is that one has to keep one's eyes fixed on the semi-idiots who surround one, and to let one's mind be colored by their undistinguished sensations. My fault is to fasten upon the person least incapable of imagination and to become unintelligible to the rest, who are perhaps all the better pleased.

Since I have been in Rome I am not witty so often as once a week, and even then barely for five minutes; I had rather dream. These people have not enough understanding of the subtleties of the French language to feel the subtleties of my observations; they must have the coarse wit of a bagman; just like melodrama, which delights them (witness Michelangelo Caetani) and is their daily bread. The sight of its success freezes me. I cannot condescend to talk to people who have applauded melodrama. I see all the nothingness of vanity.

It was two months ago, then, in September 1835, while I was musing upon writing these Memoirs, on the shore of the Alban Lake (two hundred feet above the level of the lake) that I wrote in the dust, like Zadig, these initials:

a d i l ine pg de r
 V. A . A . M. M. A . A . A . M . C. G. A .
 1 2 3 4 5 6
 (Mme Azur, whose Christian name I have forgotten).

I was musing profoundly upon these names and the amazing follies and sillinesses which they made me commit (I mean amazing to me, not to the reader; besides, I do not repent of them).

The fact is that I have possessed only six of the women whom I have loved.

The greatest passion must be disputed between Mélanie, Alexandrine, Métilde, and Clémentine. Clémentine is the one who caused me the greatest suffering by leaving me. But is this suffering to be compared to that occasioned by Métilde, who would not say that she loved me?

With all of these, and with several others, I have always been a child; and so I have had very little success. But in spite of this, they have filled my life with great passions, and have left me memories which charm me, some of them after twenty-four years, like the memory of the Madonna del Monte, at Varese, in 1811. I have never been a man of pleasure—not sufficiently so. My thoughts were full of the woman I loved, and of nothing else; and when I was not in love I was musing on the spectacle of human things, or reading with delight Montesquieu or Walter Scott. And that is “cause why,” as children say, I am so far from being blasé about their cunning tricks and little graces that, at the age of fifty-two, as I write this, I am still under the charm of a long gossip which Amalia had with me yesterday at the Teatro Valle.

In order to consider them as philosophically as possible, and so to try and divest them of the aureole which makes my head dizzy, dazzles me, and deprives me of the faculty of seeing clearly, I will classify these ladies (mathematical term) according to their various qualities. To begin with their usual passion then—namely, vanity

—I will say that two of them were countesses and one a baroness.

The richest was Alexandrine Petit; she and her husband spent a good eighty thousand francs a year. The poorest was Mina de Grisheim, the youngest daughter of a general with no fortune, the favorite of a fallen prince, whose pay supported the whole family; or Mlle Bereyter, an actress at the Opera Bouffe.

I try to make an abstraction of the charm, the dazzling quality of events, by considering them in this military fashion. It is my sole expedient for arriving at the truth about a subject on which I can converse with nobody. Owing to the shamefacedness of the melancholy temperament (Cabanis), I have always been incredibly, insanely discreet on this point. In intelligence Clémentine surpassed all the others. Métilde surpassed them in the Spanish nobility of her sentiments; Giulia, it seems to me, in force of character, although at first sight she appeared the weakest; Angela P. was a sublime woman of pleasure in the Italian fashion, like Lucrezia Borgia, and Mme Azur a woman of pleasure, but not sublime, like the Du Barry.

I was never in trouble about money except twice, at the end of 1805 and up to August 1806, when my father ceased sending me money—without giving me notice, that was the trouble; once he was five months without paying my allowance of a hundred and fifty francs. Hence the great times of poverty which I shared with the Viscount; he received his allowance punctually, but regularly gambled it all away the day he received it.

In 1829 and 1830 I was in difficulties more owing to carelessness and imprudence than to actual lack of means, for I went on three or four journeys, to Italy, England, and Barcelona, and at the end of this period I owed only four hundred francs.

My greatest money difficulties led me to the unpleasant step of borrowing a hundred francs, or sometimes

two hundred, from M. Beau. I returned them after a month or two; and in the end, in September 1830, I owed four hundred francs to my tailor, Michel. Those who know the way of living among young men of my time will consider this very moderate. From 1800 to 1830 I had not owed a penny to my tailor, Léger, nor to his successor, Michel (22, rue Vivienne).

My friends at that date, 1830, Messieurs de Mareste and Colomb, were friends of a singular kind; they would no doubt have taken active steps to save me from any great danger, but when I went out in a new coat they would have given twenty francs, especially the former, to see somebody throw a glass of dirty water over me. (Except the Vicomte de Barral and Bigillion, of Saint-Ismier, I have never had any friends in my whole life who were not of that sort.)

They were good fellows, highly prudent, who had got together a salary or an income of twelve thousand or fifteen thousand francs by assiduous toil or skillfulness, and could not bear to see me gay, careless, and happy with a pen and a blank notebook, living on not more than four thousand or five thousand francs. They would have been a hundred times fonder of me if they had seen me unhappy and sad at having only half or a third of their income; me, who had perhaps shocked them a little in the old days, when I had a coachman, two horses, a *calèche*, and a cabriolet; for my luxury had risen to these heights in the days of the Emperor. At that time I was ambitious, or thought I was; what hampered me in this supposition was the fact that I did not know what to desire. I was ashamed of being in love with the Countess Al. Petit, I had as my kept mistress Mlle A. Bereyter, an actress at the Opera Bouffe, I lunched at the Café Hardy, I was full of an incredible activity, I came back from Saint-Cloud to Paris on purpose to hear an act of the *Matrimonio Segreto* at the Odéon (Mme Barilli, Barilli, Tachinardi, Mme Festa,

Mlle Bereyter). My cabriolet used to wait at the door of the Café Hardy; that was what my brother-in-law never forgave me.

All this might be mistaken for silly conceit, and yet it was not that. I tried to enjoy life and action, but I made no attempt to display a greater enjoyment or activity than really existed. M. Prunelle, the doctor and wit, whose rational mind I liked greatly (a horribly ugly man, since celebrated as a venal deputy and mayor of Lyons toward 1833), and who was an acquaintance of mine in those days, said of me: "He was an arrant coxcomb." This judgment was echoed by my acquaintances. Perhaps, indeed, they were right.

My excellent middle-class brother-in-law, M. Périer-Lagrange (a retired merchant who was gradually ruining himself by agriculture, without knowing it, near La Tour-du-Pin), when he lunched with me at the Café Hardy and saw me ordering the waiters about sharply (for, with all the duties which I had to perform, I was often in a hurry), was delighted because these waiters made some joke among themselves which implied that I was a conceited ass; but it did not annoy me at all. I have always, as if by instinct (an instinct thoroughly confirmed since then by the Chambers), had a profound contempt for the middle classes.

All the same, I divined that it was only in the middle classes that there were to be found energetic men of the stamp of my cousin Rebuffel (a merchant in the rue Saint-Denis), Father Ducros, librarian of the city of Grenoble, the incomparable Gros (of the rue Saint-Laurent), a geometer of the highest order and my master (unknown to my male relations, for he was a Jacobin, and my family were bigoted Ultras). These three men possessed all my esteem and all my affection, in so far as my respect for them and the difference of age could admit of those relations which lead to love. I was even, with them, the same as I was later with those whom I loved too much: dumb, motionless, stupid, un-

lovable, and sometimes giving offense by reason of my very devotion and selflessness. Self-love, self-interest, my very self, disappeared in the presence of the person I loved. I became absorbed into that person. What, then, was not my state when that person was a worthless woman, like Mme Pietragrua? But I am always anticipating. Shall I have the courage to write these Confessions intelligibly? I ought to be telling a story, and I am writing a commentary on events which are very detailed, but, precisely on account of their microscopic proportions, require to be told very clearly. What patience you will need, my reader!

And so, in my opinion, energy was to be found, even in my eyes (in 1811), only in that class which has to struggle with real necessities.

My friends of noble family—MM. Raymond de Berenger (killed at Lützen), Saint-Ferréol, Sinard (a bigotedly religious man who died young), Gabriel Du B—— (a bit of a cheat, or a shameless borrower, now a peer of France and Ultra to the very depths of his soul), M. de Monval—always seemed to me to have a singular quality, an alarming respect for conventional observances (for instance, Sinard). They were always seeking after “the best tone,” “the right thing,” as we used to say at Grenoble in 1793. But I was far from sharing these views very definitely. It is less than a year since my conception of nobility became finally complete. Instinctively, my life in the moral sphere has been passed in a close consideration of five or six principal ideas, and in trying to see the truth about them.

Raymond de Berenger was an excellent fellow and a real example of the maxim *noblesse oblige*; whereas Monval (who died about 1829 at Grenoble, a colonel and generally despised) was the ideal of a deputy of the Center. All this could already be seen quite clearly when these gentlemen were fifteen years old, about 1798.

It is only while writing them down, in 1835, that I see the truth clearly about most of these things, so com-

pletely have they been enveloped up to now in the halo of youth, which arises from the extreme acuteness of our sensations.

It is by dint of employing the methods of philosophy—for instance, by dint of classifying the friends of my youth by genera, as M. Adrien de Jussieu does for his plants (in botany)—that I seek to attain the truth which eludes me. I perceive that what I took for high mountains in 1800 were for the most part nothing but mole-hills; but this is a discovery which I did not make till very late.

I see that I was like a nervous horse, and it is to a remark made to me by M. de Tracy (the famous Comte Destutt de Tracy, a peer of France and a member of the French Academy, and, best of all, the originator of the law of the 3rd Prairial [May 22] on the Central Schools), it is to a remark made to me by M. de Tracy that I owe this discovery.

I must give an example. For a trifle, for instance a door half open at night, I would imagine to myself two armed men lying in wait to prevent me from reaching a window which looked onto a passage where I could see my mistress. It was an illusion which a wise man, like my friend Abraham Constantin, would not have had. But in a few seconds' time (four or five at the most) the sacrifice of my life was made and perfected and I rushed like a hero on my two enemies, who turned into a half-open door.

Less than two months ago something of this kind happened to me again, but in the moral sphere. The sacrifice had been made, and all the necessary courage had been forthcoming, when twenty hours afterward I perceived, on re-reading a hastily read letter (from M. Herrard), that it was an illusion. I always read very fast what is painful to me.

And so, by classifying my life like a collection of plants, I found the following:

Childhood, early education, from 1786 to 1800.	15 years
Military service, from 1800 to 1803.	3 years
Second part of education, ridiculous love-affairs with Mlle Adèle Clozel and her mother, who annexed her daughter's lover. Life in the rue D'Angiviller. Lastly, my beautiful life at Marseilles with Mélanie, from 1803 to 1805.	2 years
Return to Paris, end of my education.	1 year
Official life under Napoleon, from 1806 to the end of 1814 (from October 1806 to his abdication in 1814).	7½ years
My adhesion, in the same number of the <i>Moniteur</i> as that in which was announced the abdication of Napoleon. Travels, great and terrible loves, consolation found in writing books, from 1814 to 1830.	15½ years
Second period of official life, from 15th of September 1830 up to the present quarter of an hour.	5 years

I made my entry into society in the drawing-room of Mme de Vaulserre, a bigot with an odd face and a receding chin, a daughter of the Baron des Adrets and a friend of my mother's. This was probably about 1794. I had a passionate temperament, and the shyness described by Cabanis. I was extremely affected by the beautiful arms of Mlle Bonne de Saint-Vallier, I think; I see the face and the beautiful arms, but the name is uncertain: perhaps it was Mlle de Lavalette. M. de Saint-Ferréol, of whom I have never heard since, was my enemy and rival, and M. de Sinard, a mutual friend, pacified us. All this happened in a magnificent ground-floor apartment opening onto the garden of Des Adrets' mansion, now destroyed and become the dwelling of a middle-class family, in the rue Neuve at Grenoble. At the same period began my passionate admiration for Father Ducros (a secularized Franciscan friar, a man of the highest merit, at least so it appears to me). I had as my intimate friend my grandfather, M. Henri Gagnon, a doctor of medicine.

After all these general observations, I will now be born.



CHAPTER III

My earliest memory is that of biting in the cheek or on the forehead Mme Pison-Dugalland, my cousin, the wife of the witty deputy in the Constituent Assembly. I see her still, a woman of twenty-five, plump and very much rouged. It was apparently this rouge at which I took offense. As she sat in the middle of the meadow called the "glacis of the Porte de Bonne," her cheek was exactly on a level with my face.

"Kiss me, Henri," she said to me. I did not want to; she was annoyed, and I bit her hard. I can see the whole scene, no doubt because I was at once reproached with it as if it had been a crime, and because my family never stopped talking to me about it.

The glacis of the Porte de Bonne was covered with daisies. They were pretty little flowers, and I was picking a bunch of them. This meadow, as it was in 1786, is no doubt nowadays in the middle of the town, to the south of the collegiate church.

My Aunt Séraphie declared that I was a monster, and that I had an abominable character. This Aunt Séraphie had the sour temper of a sanctimonious old maid who has not been able to get married. What had happened? I never knew (we never know the scandals about our relations); and I left the town for good at the age of sixteen, after three years of a most violent passion which had withdrawn me into complete solitude.

My next characteristic action was even more black. I had made a collection of reeds, again on the glacis of the Porte de Bonne (Bonne de Lesdiguières. Ask the

botanical name of the reed, a plant cylindrical in form like a chicken's feather, and a foot long).

I had been brought home to our house, one window of which, on the first floor, looked onto the Grande-rue at the corner of the Place Grenette. I was making a garden by cutting these reeds into pieces two inches long, which I arranged in the space between the balcony and the projecting molding of the window-frame. The kitchen knife which I was using slipped out of my hand and fell into the street—that is to say, about a dozen feet below—near a certain Mme Chenavaz. She was the most ill-natured woman in all the town (the mother of Candide Chenavaz, who, in his youth, adored Richardson's *Clarissa Harlowe*, later one of M. de Villèle's Three Hundred,¹ and rewarded by the position of First President of the Royal Courts of Law at Grenoble; died at Lyons before his official inauguration).

My Aunt Séraphie said that I had tried to kill Mme Chenavaz; I was declared to be possessed of an abominable character, and scolded by my excellent grandfather, M. Gagnon. He was afraid of his daughter Séraphie, whose reputation for piety stood higher than any in town. I was scolded even by that woman of lofty and Spanish character, my excellent great-aunt, Mlle Elisabeth Gagnon.

I was indignant. I may have been four years old. From this time dates my horror of religion, a horror which my reason has succeeded, with great difficulty, in reducing to just proportions, and that quite recently, less than six years ago. About the same period first arose my instinctive filial love for my mother, which was at that time a real transport of passion. I was not more than five years

¹ "M. de Villèle's Three Hundred": a reference to the subservient royalist majority returned to the Chamber at the elections of 1824. M. de Villèle, who had sat in the Chamber as an Ultra and become first minister to Louis XVIII in 1821, had made use of the success of the Spanish campaign of 1823 to manipulate the elections, with such success that only nineteen liberals were returned to the Chamber.

old. This Aunt Séraphie was my evil genius during my whole childhood; she was detested, but had great influence in the family. I suppose that in after days my father was in love with her; at least there were long walks to Les Granges, in a marsh below the walls of the town, in which I alone was the unwelcome third party, and was terribly bored. I used to hide when it was time to start on these walks. On this was shipwrecked the very slight affection which I had for my father.

In reality, I was brought up solely by my excellent grandfather, M. Henri Gagnon. This man of rare qualities had made a pilgrimage to Ferney to see Voltaire, and had been received by him with every mark of distinction. He had a little bust of Voltaire, as big as one's fist, mounted on an ebony pedestal six inches high. (It was a singular taste, but the fine arts were not the strong point either of Voltaire or of my excellent grandfather.)

This bust was placed before the desk at which he wrote; his study was at the far end of his spacious apartment, which opened onto a fine terrace adorned with flowers. It was a rare favor for me to be admitted to it, and a rarer one still to see and touch the bust of Voltaire.

In spite of all this, from as far back as I can remember, the writings of Voltaire have always been supremely distasteful to me; they seemed to me childish stuff. I may say that I never liked anything in this great man. I could not see then that he was the lawgiver and apostle of France, her Martin Luther.

M. Henri Gagnon wore a round, powdered wig with three rows of curls, because he was a doctor of medicine. He was fashionable among the ladies, and was even accused of having been the lover of several of them, among others Mme Teisseire, one of the prettiest women in the town, whom I do not remember ever to have seen, for the families were on bad terms then; but I was made aware of it later in a singular way. On account of

his wig, my excellent grandfather always seemed to me to be eighty years old. He suffered from the vapors (like me, to my sorrow) and from rheumatism, and walked with difficulty; but he would never, on principle, ride in a carriage or put on his hat—a little three-cornered hat for carrying under the arm, which it was my delight to seize and put on my head when I could. This was considered by the whole family to be lacking in respect; and at last, out of respect, I ceased to think about the three-cornered hat and the little walking-stick with the box-root knob and tortoise-shell mount. My grandfather adored the so-called letters of Hippocrates, which he read in Latin (though he knew a little Greek), and Horace in the edition of Johannes Bond, printed in horribly minute letters. He inspired me with these two passions, and, in reality, with almost all his tastes, but not in the way he would have wished, as I shall explain later.

If I ever return to Grenoble, I must have a search made for the birth and death certificates of this excellent man, who adored me and did not love his son, M. (Romain) Gagnon, father of M. Oronce Gagnon, a major in the dragoons, who killed his man in a duel three years ago, for which I owe him thanks; he is probably no fool. I have not seen him for thirty-three years; he may be thirty-five.

I lost my grandfather while I was in Germany; was it in 1807 or 1813? I have no clear recollection. I remember that I made a journey to Grenoble to see him once more; I found that he had quite lost his spirits. This charming man, who was the center of the evening parties to which he used to go, now hardly spoke a word. He said to me: "It is a farewell visit," and then spoke of other matters; he had a horror of senseless scenes of family emotion.

A memory comes back to me: about 1807 I had my portrait painted, in order to induce Mme Alex Petit to have hers painted too; and as the number of sittings

was an objection, I took her to a painter opposite the Fountain of the Diorama, who painted a portrait in oils at one sitting for a hundred and twenty francs. My good grandfather saw this portrait, which I had sent to my sister, I think, to get rid of it. He had already lost many of his faculties. On seeing the portrait, he said: "That one is the most like him," and then collapsed again into weakness and melancholy. He died soon after, as it seems to me, at the age of eighty-two, I think.

If this date is correct, he must have been sixty-one in 1789 and have been born about 1728. He used sometimes to describe the Battle of the Col de l'Assiette,² an attack in the Alps unsuccessfully attempted by the Chevalier de Belle-Isle in 1742, I think. His father, a man full of resolution, energy, and honor, had sent him there as an army surgeon, to form his character. My grandfather was just beginning his study of medicine, and might have been eighteen or twenty years old, which points again to 1724 as the date of his birth.

He owned an old house in the finest situation in the town, on the Place Grenette, at the corner of the Grand-rue, looking due south, and having before it the finest square in the town, the two rival cafés, and the meeting-place of good society. There, on the first floor, with its low-ceiled but delightfully cheerful rooms, my grandfather lived up till 1789.

He must have been rich at that date, for he bought a magnificent house situated behind his own and belonging to the Milles de Marnais. He moved up to the second floor of his house on the Place Grenette, with the whole of the corresponding story of the Marnais house, and made himself the finest residence in the town. There was a staircase which was magnificent for that period, and a drawing-room which may have measured thirty-five feet by twenty-eight.

Some repairs were carried out in the two rooms of

² Battle of the Col de l'Assiette: in 1747, during the War of the Austrian Succession.

this apartment which overlooked the Place Grenette, and among other things they made a *gippe* (a partition made of plaster and bricks laid edgeways one upon the other) to separate the bedroom of the redoubtable Aunt Séraphie, the daughter of M. Gagnon, from that of my Great-aunt Elisabeth, his sister. They placed iron clamps in this *gippe*, and on the plaster of each clamp I wrote: *Henri Beyle, 1789*. I can still see these fine inscriptions, which were the wonder of my grandfather.

"Since you write so well," he said to me, "you are fit to start Latin."

This saying inspired me with a sort of terror, and a pedant of hideous proportions, M. Joubert, tall, pale, and thin as a knife, leaning on a thorn stick, came to expound to me and teach me *mura*, the mulberry. We went to buy a primer from M. Giroud the bookseller, at the far end of a courtyard opening off the Place aux Herbes. I little suspected then what an instrument for my undoing we were buying there.

Here begin my misfortunes.

But I am putting off too long a necessary statement, one of the two or three which will perhaps make me throw these Memoirs into the fire.

My mother, Mme Henriette Gagnon, was a charming woman, and I was in love with her.

I hasten to add that I lost her when I was seven years old.

In loving her at the age of perhaps six (1789), I had exactly the same character as when, in 1828, I loved Alberthe de Rubempré with a mad passion. My way of starting on the quest for happiness had not changed at all in essentials, with this sole exception: that in what constitutes the physical side of love I was what Cæsar would be, if he came back to earth, with regard to the use of cannon and small arms. I should soon have learned, and it would have changed nothing essential in my tactics.

I wanted to cover my mother with kisses, and for her

to have no clothes on. She loved me passionately and often kissed me; I returned her kisses with such ardor that she was often obliged to go away. I abhorred my father when he came and interrupted our kisses. I always wanted to give them to her on her bosom. Be so good as to remember that I lost her, in childbed, when I was barely seven.

She was plump, and of an exquisite freshness; she was very pretty, and I think she was only rather short. She had an expression of perfect nobility and serenity; she was dark, vivacious, and surrounded by a regular court; she often forgot to give the orders to her three maidservants; and, to conclude, she used often to read in the original the *Divine Comedy* of Dante, of which I found long afterward five or six different editions in her apartments, which had remained shut up since her death.

She perished in the flower of her youth and beauty; in 1790 she might have been twenty-eight or thirty years old.

Here begins my moral life.

My Aunt Séraphie dared to reproach me with not weeping enough. You can imagine my suffering, and what I felt! But it seemed to me that I should see my mother again on the morrow; I did not understand what death meant.

And so it is forty-five years since I lost what I loved more than anything in the world.

She cannot be insulted at the liberty which I take with her in revealing that I loved her; if I ever meet her again, I would tell her so again. Besides, she took no sort of part in this love. She did not play the Venetian, like Mme Benzoni with the author of *Nella*. For my part, I was as criminal as possible; I loved her charms with a mad passion.

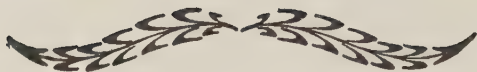
One evening, when by some chance I had been put to sleep on the floor of her room, on a mattress, this

woman, as light and agile as a deer, bounded over my mattress to reach her bed more quickly.

Her room remained closed for ten years after her death. My father was with difficulty persuaded to let me put a blackboard of oilcloth there, to study mathematics, in 1798, but no servants entered it; they would have been severely reprimanded. I alone had the key. This sentiment of my father's does him great honor in my eyes, now I come to think of it.

She died, then, in her bedroom in the rue des Vieux-Jésuites, the fifth or sixth house to the left coming from the Grande-rue opposite the house of M. Teisseire. It was there I had been born. This house belonged to my father, who sold it when he began to build his new street and other follies. This street, which ruined him, was called the rue Dauphin (my father was an extreme Ultra, a partisan of the priests and nobles), and is now, I believe, called the rue Lafayette.

I spent my life with my grandfather, whose house was barely a hundred yards from ours.



CHAPTER IV

I could write a volume on the circumstances of the death of one so dear.

That is to say, I am in absolute ignorance of the details; she died in childbed, apparently owing to the incompetence of a surgeon named Hérault, a fool chosen apparently out of pique against another obstetrician, a clever and talented man, very much as Mme Petit died in 1814. All I can describe at length are my feelings, which would probably seem exaggerated or incredible to a spectator accustomed to the falsified nature found in novels (I do not refer to Fielding) or to the sickly nature found in novels constructed out of Parisian hearts.

I may tell the reader that Dauphiné has its own way of feeling, lively, stubborn, and analytical, which I have met with in no other country. To the seeing eye, with every three degrees of latitude, music, landscape, and the novel should change. For instance, at Valence, on the Rhône, the Provençal nature ends; the Burgundian nature begins at Valence, and gives place, between Dijon and Troyes, to the Parisian nature, polished, witty, and lacking in depth—in a word, thinking much about others.

The character native to Dauphiné has a tenacity, a depth, an intelligence and subtlety which one would seek in vain in the civilizations of Provence or Burgundy, its neighbors. In a case where the native of Provence pours out atrocious insults, the man of Dauphiné ponders, and takes counsel with his heart.

Everybody knows that Dauphiné was once a state separate from France, and half Italian in policy, up to the year 1349. Then Louis XI, as Dauphin, when he was on bad terms with his father, administered the country for sixteen years, and I am inclined to believe that it is his genius, deep, profoundly timid, and hostile to impulsive action, which has left its impress on the character of the men of Dauphiné. In my time it was still the conviction of my grandfather and my Aunt Elisabeth, a regular type of the strong and generous sentiments of my family, that Paris was by no means a model, but a remote and hostile city whose influence was to be dreaded.

Now that I have paid my court to my less impressionable readers by this digression, I will relate that, on the eve of my mother's death, my sister Pauline and I were taken for a walk in the rue Montorge; we returned past the houses on the left-hand side of this street (to the north). We had been sent to stay at my grandfather's in the house on the Place Grenette. I was sleeping on a mattress on the floor, between the window and the fireplace, when toward two in the morning the whole family came in sobbing.

"But how is it the doctors have found no medicine to cure her?" I said to old Marion (a regular servant out of Molière, loving her masters, but all the same speaking her mind to them, who had known my mother in her early youth, and had seen her married ten years before, in 1780), who was very fond of me.

Marie Thomasset, of Vinay, a typical character of Dauphiné, called by the diminutive Marion, passed the night sitting beside my mattress and weeping bitter tears, having apparently been given the task of controlling my grief. What I felt was more amazement than despair. I did not understand what death was; I hardly believed in it.

"What!" I said to Marion; "I shall never see her again?"

"How do you imagine you will see her if they carries her off to the cemetery?"

"But where is it, the cemetery?"

"In the rue des Mûriers; it is the one belonging to the parish of Notre-Dame."

The whole of our conversation that night is still present to me, and I could, if I wished, write it all out here. It was then that my moral life really began; I must have been six and a half years old. However, these dates are easily verified by the entries in the register of births and deaths.

I fell asleep; the next morning, when I woke up, Marion said to me:

"You must go and kiss your father."

"What, my little mama is dead! But how is it I shall never see her again?"

"Will you be quiet? Your father will hear you; he is there, in Great-aunt's bed."

I went unwillingly up to the space beside the bed, where it was dark because the bed-curtains were drawn. I felt an aversion from my father, and kissing him was repugnant to me.

A moment afterward arrived the Abbé Rey, a very tall man, with a cold manner, pitted with smallpox, looking dull-witted and kind, and talking through his nose, who soon afterward became Vicar-General. He was a friend of the family.

Can it be believed? Because of his priestly office, I had an antipathy for him.

The Abbé Rey placed himself near the window. My father got up, put on his dressing-gown, and came out of the alcove, which was closed by green serge curtains (there were other curtains, beautiful ones of pink taffeta, embroidered with white, which hid the others in the daytime).

The Abbé Rey embraced my father in silence. My father appeared to me very ugly; his eyes were swollen,

and tears overcame him every moment. I had stayed in the dim alcove, and could see very well.

"My friend, this is sent by God," said the Abbé at last; and this remark, made by a man whom I hated to another for whom I had hardly any affection, made me meditate profoundly.

I may be thought insensible, but I still felt only astonishment at the death of my mother. I did not understand the word. Dare I write what Marion has often repeated to me since as a reproach? I began to speak evil of God.

At any rate, even supposing that I am lying about these sallies of newly sprouting infantile wit, I am certainly not lying about all the rest. If I am tempted to lie, it will be later on when I come to deal with very big faults of much later date. I have no faith in that class of child mind which announces an exceptional being. In a sphere where illusion can play less part—for, after all, the actual work accomplished remains—all the bad painters I have known have done amazing things, announcing genius, about the age of eight or ten.

Alas! nothing announces genius; perhaps stubborn persistence may be a sign.

On the morrow, the question of the funeral was discussed. My father, whose face was really quite changed, dressed me in a sort of black woolen cloak, which he tied round my neck. This scene took place in my father's study in the rue des Vieux-Jésuites; my father was in black and the whole room was lined with folios, horrible to see. The *Encyclopædia* of d'Alembert and Diderot alone, in blue paper covers, formed an exception to the general ugliness.

This ⁽¹⁾ had belonged by right to M. de Brenier, husband of Mlle de Vaulserre and Comte de Vaulserre. Mlle de Vaulserre gave this title to her husband; they changed their name from that time onward, Vaulserre

¹ Word missing in the original.

being nobler and finer than de Brenier. She has since become a canoness.

All the relations and friends gathered together in my father's study.

Dressed in my black cloak, I stood between my father's knees at one. Our cousin, the elder M. Picot, a serious-minded man, but in the fashion of a courtier, who was greatly respected in the family for his worldly wisdom (he was thin, aged fifty-five, with a distinguished figure), entered and took his place at three.

Instead of weeping and being depressed, he began to make conversation as usual, and to talk about the Court (perhaps it was the court of law, the *Parlement*;² it is very probable). I thought he was talking about foreign courts, and was deeply shocked at his heartlessness.

A moment afterward entered my uncle, my mother's brother, a young man of exceptionally fine figure and most charming manners, dressed with extreme elegance. He was the Don Juan of the town. He also began to make conversation in the usual way with M. Picot; he took up his place at four. I was violently indignant, and I remember that my father called him a frivolous fellow. However, I noticed that his eyes were very red, and he had a most handsome face; that calmed me a little.

His hair was dressed with the utmost elegance, and his hair-powder was scented; his style of hairdressing consisted in a square bag of black taffeta and two large side-pieces, which six years later were called "dog's ears,"

² *Parlement*: the name *parlement* was given in France at an early date to the Royal Courts. The *Parlement* of Paris was the supreme court of justice in the kingdom, and the name was also given to the courts afterward created in the provincial capitals. Grenoble, as the capital of Dauphiné, had its own *parlement*, with its full hierarchy of presidents, counselors, advocates, procurators, etc., on the model of the supreme court. In the reorganization of the judicial system under the Empire, the *parlements* became the courts of appeal from the numerous courts of first instance created in the groups of Departments corresponding to the old provinces. Under the name of "Royal Courts," they continued to exist after the restoration of the monarchy.

such as are still worn at the present day by Prince Talleyrand.

A loud noise was heard; it was my poor mother's coffin, which they were removing from the drawing-room in order to carry it away.

"There, there! I do not know the order of these ceremonies," said M. Picot in an indifferent tone, as he rose from his chair. It shocked me greatly; and this was my last *social* sensation. When I entered the drawing-room and saw the coffin, covered with black cloth, in which lay my mother, I was seized with the most violent despair; I at last knew the meaning of death.

My Aunt Séraphie had already accused me of being heartless.

I will spare the reader a recital of all the phases of my despair in the parish church of Saint-Hugues. I was choked with grief, and I believe they were obliged to take me out because of the disturbance my sorrow made. I have never been able to look with complete calm at that church of Saint-Hugues, and the cathedral which adjoins it. The very sound of the cathedral bells, even in 1828, when I came back to Grenoble, produced in me a dull, arid grief without any stirring of the feelings, that grief which is akin to rage.

On arriving at the cemetery, which was in a bastion near the rue des Mûriers (now, or at least in 1828, occupied by a great building, a storehouse belonging to the Engineers), I acted as one mad, as Marion has since described to me. It seems that I did not want them to throw any earth on my mother's coffin, protesting that they would hurt her. But—

O'er the dark colors of this dismal view

Let's pass the sponge, or draw the curtains to.

By reason of the complicated play of character in the members of my family, it came to pass that with my mother's death all the joy of my childhood came to an end.



CHAPTER V

Little Events of My Early Childhood

At the time when we occupied the first floor overlooking the Place Grenette, before 1790, or, more exactly, up to the middle of 1789, my uncle, a young barrister, had a charming apartment on the second floor, at the corner of the Place Grenette and the Grande-rue. He used to laugh with me, and let me see him take off his fine clothes and put on his dressing-gown in the evening, at nine o'clock, before supper. It was a delightful moment for me, and I used to descend the stairs again to the first floor full of joy, carrying before him the silver candlestick. My aristocratic family would have thought themselves dishonored if the candlestick had not been of silver. It is true that it did not bear a noble wax candle; it was the custom then to use tallow. But these tallow candles were brought with great care in a wooden box from the neighborhood of Briançon; they had to be made of goat's tallow, and with this in view we used to write in due time to a friend of ours in the mountains near there. I can still see myself looking on at the unpacking of the candles, eating bread and milk out of a silver porringer; the scraping of the spoon against the bottom of the bowl when it was wet with milk struck me as being curious. The relations which we had with this friend at Briançon were almost those of host to guest, as seen in Homer, a natural result of the prevailing mistrust and barbarism.

My uncle, young, brilliant, and frivolous, was considered the most charming man in the town; so much so that many years afterward Mme Delaunay, in justifying her claim to virtue—a virtue which had, however, made many slips—remarked: “All the same, I never yielded to young M. Gagnon.”

My uncle, I say, used to make great fun of the gravity of his father, who was very much taken aback on meeting him in society in clothes for which he had not paid himself. “I made myself scarce as soon as possible,” added my uncle, in relating this incident.

One evening, in the teeth of everybody (but who was there to oppose it before 1790?), he took me to the theater. They were playing *The Cid*.

“But that child is mad,” said my excellent grandfather on my return. His love of literature had prevented his making any serious objection to my visiting the play. So I saw *The Cid*, but played, I seem to remember, in coats of sky-blue satin with white satin shoes.

While declaiming the stanzas, or at some other point, in brandishing a sword too vigorously, the Cid wounded himself in the right eye.

“A little farther,” said the people sitting round me, “and he would have put his eye out.” I was in the first tier of boxes, the second to the right.

Another time, my uncle was indulgent enough to take me to *The Caravan of Cairo*. (I was in his way in the round which he made of the boxes to visit the ladies. I was quite aware of this.) The camels made me simply lose my head. The *Infanta of Zamora*, in which a coward, or else a cook, sang an air, wearing a helmet with a rat on its crest, made me delirious with joy. For me this was true comedy.

I said to myself, dimly no doubt, and not so clearly as I write it here: “Every moment of my uncle’s life is as delightful as those in whose pleasure I share at the play. So it is the finest thing in the world to be a charming

man, like my uncle." It never entered my five-year-old head that my uncle might not be as happy as I was in seeing the procession of camels in *The Caravan*.

But I went too far: instead of being gallant, I was passionate with the women whom I loved; almost indifferent, and, above all, lacking in vanity with the others; hence my lack of success and the fiascos which I made. No man, perhaps, at the Court of the Emperor possessed fewer women than I, though I was believed to be the lover of the prime minister's wife.

The play, the sound of a deep and solemn bell (as at the church of [1], above Rolle, in May 1800, on the way to the Saint Bernard) have, and always had, a profound effect upon my heart. Even the Mass, in which I believed so little, inspired me with solemn thoughts. When I was still quite young, and certainly before I was ten and before the episode of the letter to which I forged the Abbé Gardon's signature, I believed that God despised these mountebanks. (After forty-two years of reflection I still follow this mystification, which is so profitable to those who practice it that it will always find someone to continue it. Story of the medal, related the day before yesterday by Umberto Guitri, December 1835.)

I have the clearest and most precise recollection of my grandfather's round, powdered wig; it had three rows of curls. He never wore a hat.

This costume had had its share, it seems to me, in making him known and respected among people, from whom he never took any money for his medical attendance.

He was the doctor and friend of most of the noble families. M. de Chaleón, in connection with whom I still remember the sound of the chimes rung at the Church of Saint-Louis at the time of his death; M. de Lacoste, who had apoplexy at the Terres-Froides, at La Frette; M. de Langon, "of the highest nobility," as the

¹ Blank in the original. He never gives the name of the church.

idiots used to say; M. de Ravix, who had the itch, and used to throw his cloak down on the floor in my grandfather's bedroom; my grandfather scolded me, with moderation, because, after speaking of this circumstance, I mentioned M. de Ravix's name; M. and Mme des Adrets, Mme de Vaulserre, their daughter, in whose drawing-room I first made my appearance in society. Her sister, Mme de M——, seemed to me very pretty and had the reputation of being a woman of pleasure.

At the time when I knew him, he was, and had been for twenty-five years, the promoter of all those useful enterprises which might, considering the political immaturity of those remote times, have been called liberal. It was owing to him that the public library was founded. This was no light affair. First it had to be bought, then a site found, and then the librarian endowed.

He was the protector, in the first place against their parents and afterward in more practical ways, of all young men who showed a love of study. He used to quote to recalcitrant parents the example of Vaucanson.²

When my grandfather returned from Montpellier to Grenoble (as a doctor of medicine), he had a very fine head of hair, but the public opinion of 1760 soon intimated to him imperiously that if he did not take to a wig nobody would trust him. An old lady named Didier, a cousin who made him her co-heir with my Aunt Elisabeth and died about 1788, had been of this opinion. This good cousin used to give me yellow bread (with saffron) to eat when I went to see her on St. Laurence's Day. She lived in the street by the side of the Church of Saint-Laurent. My old nurse, Françoise, whom I still adored, had a grocer's shop in the same street. She had left my mother to get married. She was replaced by the beautiful Geneviève, her sister, to whom my father, they say, used to pay attentions.

² Vaucanson (1709-1782): born at Grenoble in a humble station of life; was the inventor of many improvements in the loom and processes of weaving.

My grandfather's bedroom, on the first floor overlooking the Place Grenette, was painted in dark green, and my father used to say to me:

"Grandpapa, who has so much intelligence, has not good artistic taste."

It is owing to the timid character of the French that they rarely use decided colors: green, red, bright yellow; they prefer neutral tones. With this reservation, I do not see what there was to blame in my grandfather's choice. His room looked due south, he was a great reader; he wished to save his eyes, of which he sometimes complained.

But the reader, if he himself has a taste for these trifles, will see without difficulty that all my wherefores, all my explanations, may be quite at fault. I have nothing in my mind but a series of very clear pictures; all my explanations come to me as I write this, forty-five years after the events.

My excellent grandfather, who was in reality my true father and my intimate friend, until I made up my mind, about 1796, to get away from Grenoble by means of mathematics, used often to relate a wonderful event.

My mother had had me carried into her bedroom (the green room) the day I was one year old, the 23rd of January 1784, and was holding me upright on my feet near the window; my grandfather, who was sitting near the bed, called me; I determined to walk, and managed to reach him.

I could talk a little then, and used to salute people by saying *hateus* (adieu). My uncle used to tease his sister Henriette (my mother) about my ugliness. It appears that I had an enormous head, with no hair, and that I was like Father Brulard, a worldly-wise monk, fond of good living and very influential in his monastery, an uncle or grand-uncle of mine, who died before my time.

I was very enterprising. This led to two accidents, related with terror and regret by my grandfather: not far from the rock of the Porte de France I poked a

mule with a pointed piece of stick cut to a point with a knife; it had the impudence to lift up its heels and kick me in the chest, and it knocked me over. "A little more, and he would have been killed," my grandfather used to say.

I can see the event in my mind's eye, but it is probably not a direct recollection; it is only the memory of the picture which I very early formed of the occurrence in my mind at the time when the first accounts of it were given me.

The second tragic event was that, between my mother and my grandfather, I broke two front teeth by falling on the corner of a chair. My good grandfather could not recover from his astonishment. "Between his mother and me," he used to repeat, as if deploring the power of fate.

The main feature, to my mind, of this apartment on the first floor is that I used to hear the creaking of the iron bar with which they pumped; I was very fond of this groaning noise, which was long-drawn-out but not harsh.

The good sense of the men of Dauphiné was for the most part up in arms against the Court. I well remember the departure of my grandfather for the meeting of the Estates³ at Romans. He was then a highly esteemed

³ Estates: since the Middle Ages, the assembly of representatives of the three Estates of the realm in certain provinces of France (nobility, clergy, and commons) had had the right to meet and prepare petitions for the removal of grievances, grant proposed taxation, etc.; but with the growth of the powers of the Crown, these rights had lapsed, and neither the provincial Estates nor the States-General had met since 1614. One of the first signs of the coming Revolution was the meeting at *Vizille*, on their own initiative, of the Estates of Dauphiné. They demanded the summoning of the States-General to discuss the political and financial crisis which had arisen; and the States-General were summoned for May 1, 1789. The ancient administrative areas and procedure having become obsolete, the meetings to elect deputies to the States-General were held in any place that was found convenient; and those for Dauphiné were held at Romans, on the Isère, between Grenoble and Valence.

patriot, but of the more moderate party; imagine a Fontenelle⁴ turned tribune of the people.

On the day of his departure it was cold enough to split the rocks (it was—I must verify this—the hard winter of 1789-90; there was a foot of snow in the Place Grenette).

In the fireplace of my grandfather's bedroom there was an enormous fire. The room was full of friends who had come to see him get into the carriage. The most celebrated consulting advocate in the town, the oracle on all questions of law (a fine position in a town with a Parlement), M. Barthélemy d'Orbane, an intimate friend of the family, was at O, and I was at H, in front of the crackling fire. I was the hero of the moment, for I am convinced that my grandfather regretted nobody at Grenoble, and loved nobody, but me.

In this position, M. Barthélemy d'Orbane taught me to make faces. I can still see him, and myself too. It is an art in which I made the most rapid progress; I used to laugh myself at the faces which I pulled to make the others laugh. They soon began to discourage my growing taste for grimaces, but in vain; it still lasts, and I often laugh at the faces which I make when I am alone.

A conceited ass with an affected expression goes by in the street (M. Lysimaque, for instance, or Count —, the lover of Mme del Monte); I imitate his expression, and laugh. My instinct is to imitate affected movements, or rather positions, of the face rather than those of the body. At the Council of State I used involuntarily to imitate—a most dangerous thing to do—the self-important air of the famous Comte Regnault de Saint Jean-d'Angely, who was seated a few feet away from me; and especially when, the better to hear the choleric Abbé Louis, whose place was opposite him on the other side of

⁴ Fontenelle: French man of letters (1657-1757), whose cool, critical character, lacking in enthusiasm and strong feeling, is reflected in a style polished and fine rather than vigorous.

the room, he used to turn down his outrageously high shirt-collar. This instinct, or art, which I owe to M. d'Orbane, has made me many enemies. Even now the wise de Fiore reproaches me with my hidden, or rather ill-concealed, irony, which I betray, in spite of myself, by the right corner of my mouth.

At Romans my grandfather needed only five votes more to become a deputy. "I should have died of it," he used often to say when congratulating himself on having refused the votes of several bourgeois country-folk, who had confidence in him and used to come and consult him in the morning at his house. His prudence, like that of Fontenelle, prevented him from having any serious ambition; but he was none the less very fond of making a speech before a select assembly—for instance, at the library. I can still see myself there, listening to him, in the first room, which was filled with people, and in my eyes immense. But why these people? On what occasion? That is what my mental picture does not tell me. It is nothing but a picture.

My grandfather used often to relate to us how at Romans his ink, which stood on the mantelpiece, in which there was a good fire, froze on the end of his pen. He was not elected, but he obtained the election of one or two deputies, whose names I have forgotten; but he did not forget the service he had done them, and followed their progress in the Assembly, where he condemned their energy.

I was very fond of M. d'Orbane and his brother, the burly Canon; I used to go and see them on the Place des Tilleuls, or under the archway which led from the Place Notre-Dame to the Place des Tilleuls, a few steps from Notre-Dame, where the Canon used to sing. My father or my grandfather used to send the eminent advocates fat turkeys at Christmastime.

I was very fond also of Father Ducros, an unfrocked Franciscan (from the monastery situated between the

Public Gardens and the Franquières mansion, which, as I remember it, seems to have been in the Renaissance style).

I was fond, again, of the kindly Abbé Chélan, parish priest of Risset, near Claix, a thin little man, all nerves and fire, sparkling with wit, and already of a certain age—who seemed old to me, but was perhaps only forty or forty-five—and whose discussions at table amused me extremely. He never failed to come and dine with my grandfather when he came to Grenoble, and dinner was then much more gay than usual.

One day at supper he had been talking for three quarters of an hour, holding a spoonful of strawberries in his hand. At last he put it in his mouth.

“Abbé, you will not say your Mass tomorrow,” said my grandfather.

“I beg your pardon, I shall say it tomorrow, but not today, for it is after midnight.” This dialogue was my delight for a month; it seemed to me brilliantly witty. Such is wit to the nature of a young race or a young man; the emotion comes from within themselves: see the clever repartees admired by Boccaccio or Vasari.

My grandfather, in those happy days, took religion very gaily, and these gentlemen were of his opinion; he became depressed and rather religious only after the death of my mother (in 1790), and even then, I think, in the uncertain hope of meeting her again—seeing her again—in the next world; like M. de Broglie, who said of his charming daughter who died at the age of thirteen:

“I feel as if my daughter is in America.”

I believe the Abbé Chélan was dining with us on the Day of the Tiles. On that day I saw the first bloodshed of the French Revolution. It was an unfortunate journeyman hatter who was wounded to death by the stab of a bayonet in the small of his back.

We left the table in the middle of dinner (T).⁵ I was at H and Chélan, the priest, at C.

I will look up the date in some table of chronology. The scene is as clear as possible in my mind's eye, since perhaps forty-three years ago.

A M. de Clermont-Tonnerre, the military commandant of Dauphiné, who lived in the Government House, an isolated building overlooking the ramparts (with a magnificent view over the hills of Eybens, a peaceful, beautiful view worthy of Claude Lorrain), with an entrance in a fine courtyard in the rue Neuve, near the rue des Mûriers, intended, as it seems to me, to disperse an assembly of the people. He had two regiments, against which the mob defended itself with tiles, which they threw down from the tops of the houses; hence the name, the Day of Tiles.

One of the noncommissioned officers of these regiments was Bernadotte, now King of Sweden, a man with a spirit as noble as that of Murat, King of Naples, but much cleverer. Lefèvre, my father's wig-maker and friend, has often related to us how he saved the life of General Bernadotte (as he called him in 1804), who was hard pressed at the end of an avenue. Lefèvre was a handsome man, and very brave, and Marshal Bernadotte sent him a present.

But all this is a story, related, it is true, by eyewitnesses, but which I myself did not see. In future I wish to relate only what I have seen, both in Russia and elsewhere.

⁵ These letters which Stendhal uses throughout his manuscript refer to his own numerous explanatory sketches and diagrams illustrating the particular event or place of which he is writing. Of these, only three are available (those included in the Champion edition) and are here reproduced. The absence of these sketches, however, does not in any way seriously interfere with a clear understanding of the context, and the architectural plan of the Gagnon apartment, reproduced on p. 377, is in some cases a clarification of these symbols.

My parents having got up from dinner before it was finished, and I being left alone at the dining-room window, or rather at the window of a bedroom looking onto the Grande-rue, I saw an old woman who was holding her old shoes in her hand and shouting with all her might: "*I revort! I revort!*"

She was going from the Place Grenette to the Grande-rue. I saw her at R. The absurdity of this revolt made a great impression on me. One old woman against a regiment struck me very much. That very evening my grandfather told me the story of the death of Pyrrhus.

I was still thinking of the old woman when my attention was distracted by a tragic sight at O. A journeyman hatter, wounded in the back by a bayonet stab, so they said, was walking with great difficulty supported by two men, round whose shoulders he had thrown his arms. He was without a coat, his shirt and nankeen trousers were full of blood. I can see it now. The wound from which the blood was streaming was in the lower part of his back, almost opposite the navel.

They were helping him to walk, which he did with difficulty, in order to get to his room, which was on the sixth floor of the Périers' house. He died on reaching it.

My parents scolded me, and drove me away from the window of my grandfather's bedroom so that I should not see this horrible sight, but I kept returning to it. This window belonged to a very low first story.

I saw the poor wretch again on every landing of the staircase in the Périers' house, a staircase lit by great windows looking onto the square.

This memory, as is natural, is the clearest that remains with me from those times.

On the other hand, I find with great difficulty a few traces in my memory of a bonfire at Le Fontanil (on the road from Grenoble to Voreppe), in which they had just burned "Lamoignon."⁶ I was very sorry to miss see-

⁶ Lamoignon: the keeper of the seals. Having failed to obtain the ratification of his financial proposals by the Assembly of

ing a great straw figure dressed up. The fact is that my parents, who were "right-thinking"—i.e., devout Catholics and royalists—were greatly vexed by all that was a departure from "order" ("Order reigns in Warsaw," said General Sebastiani⁷ about 1832), and did not wish me to be impressed with these signs of the wrath or power of the people. As for me, at that age I was already of the opposite opinion; or perhaps my opinion at the age of eighteen is hidden by the very decided one which I had at ten.

On one occasion MM. Barthélemy d'Orbane, Canon Barthélemy, the Abbé Rey, M. Bouvier, and all the others were talking at my grandfather's about the forthcoming arrival of the Marshal de Vaux.

"His entry here will be like an entry in a ballet," said my grandfather; this epigram, which I did not understand, made me meditate deeply. What could there be in common, I said to myself, between an old marshal and a broom (*balai*: ballet)?

He died; the majestic sound of the bells moved me deeply. I was taken to see the lying-in-state (it seems to me it was in the Commandant's House near the rue des Mûriers; the memory is almost effaced); the sight of

Notables, in 1787, the Minister of Finance, Archbishop Loménie de Brienne, tried to get them ratified by the *Parlement* of Paris. This involved him in a long struggle with the *Parlement*, in which he and Lamoignon tried to imitate the high-handed procedure of the Chancellor Maupeou, who, during the reign of Louis XV, had exiled the magistrates of the *Parlement* for refusing to register the royal edicts, and replaced them by a more complaisant body. But Loménie de Brienne's brief and apparent success was followed by his fall, and he and Lamoignon were burned in effigy at Grenoble, as elsewhere.

⁷ Sebastiani: a Corsican by birth, who was a successful general and ambassador under Napoleon. After the Restoration he entered the Chamber of Deputies, and became Minister for Foreign Affairs under Louis Philippe. The grim irony of his famous remark, "Order reigns in Warsaw," after the cruel measures of repression adopted by Nicholas I, enraged all the liberals; it was especially odious to Stendhal, who regarded him as a traitor to Napoleon.

this black catafalque, illuminated in broad daylight by a quantity of tapers, with the windows closed, was a striking one. It was the idea of death appearing for the first time. I was taken there by Lambert, my grandfather's manservant (his valet) and my intimate friend. He was a young and handsome man, and very wide awake.

One of his friends came up and said to him: "The Marshal's daughter is a regular miser; the black cloth which she is giving the drummers to cover their drums is not sufficient to make a pair of breeches. The drummers are complaining loudly; the custom is to give enough for a pair of breeches." When I returned home, I found that my relations were also talking of the stinginess of this marshal's daughter.

The next day was a field day for me; I obtained permission, with great difficulty, as it seems to me, to be taken by Lambert to see the funeral procession go by. There was an enormous crowd. I can see myself at the point H, between the high road and the water, near the lime kiln two hundred feet this side of it, and to the east of the Porte de France.

The sound of the drums, muffled in the little scraps of black cloth that were not enough to make a pair of breeches, moved me greatly. But now a very different question arose: I was at the point H, at the extreme left of the battalion of the Austrasian regiment, I think, with a white uniform and black facings; L is Lambert giving his hand to me at H. I was six inches from the last soldier in the regiment S.

Suddenly he said to me:

"Move a little farther off, so that, when I fire, I shall not hurt you."

So they were going to fire! And such a lot of soldiers! They had reversed arms.

I was dying of fright; I kept an eye on the black carriage advancing slowly in the distance over the stone bridge, drawn by six or eight horses. I waited trembling

for the order to fire. At last the officer shouted an order, and the discharge of the rifles followed immediately. A great weight was lifted off me. At this moment the crowd rushed toward the draped carriage, which I saw with great pleasure; it seems to me that there were candles on it.

They fired a second, perhaps a third time, outside the Porte de France, but I was hardened to it now.

It seems to me that I also remember something of the departure for Vizille (the Estates of the province, held at the Château of Vizille, built by the Constable Lesdiguières). My grandfather adored antiquities, and from his way of talking about it, I formed an exalted idea of this château. I was on the point of conceiving a veneration for the nobility, but MM. de Saint-Ferréol and Sinard, my companions, soon cured me of this.

Mattresses used to be carried tied on behind post-chaises (the two-wheeled ones).

"Young Mounier,"⁸ as my grandfather called him, used to come to our house. It was only owing to an abrupt separation that his daughter and I in after years failed to fall violently in love with each other, in the last hour which I passed under the archway of a door in the rue Montmartre, near the boulevard, during a down-pour, in 1803 or 1804, when M. Mounier went to take up his functions as Prefect of Rennes (his letters to his son Edward; a letter from Victorine, addressed to me. The amusing thing is that Edward believes, as it seems to me, that I went to Rennes).

⁸Mounier: a magistrate of the *Parlement* of Grenoble, his native city, who played a prominent part in the early days of the Revolution. He was largely instrumental in bringing about the famous meeting of the Estates of Dauphiné at Vizille in 1788, and was afterward elected as a deputy to the States-General of May 1789. He desired a moderate constitutional monarchy; but as the Revolution advanced, his disapproval of the violent turn which it took led him to emigrate in 1790. He returned in 1801, and was appointed by Bonaparte prefect of Ille-et-Vilaine, of which the chief town is Rennes.

The little, stiff, badly painted portrait which is to be seen in a room adjoining the public library of Grenoble, and represents M. Mounier dressed in his prefect's uniform, if I am not mistaken, is like him. A face expressive of firmness, but a narrow head. His son, whom I knew well in 1803 and in Russia in 1812 (Viasma on the Tripes), is an undistinguished, artful, sharp fellow, a regular Dauphiné type, like the minister Casimir Périer;⁹ but the latter found one who out-Dauphiné'd him. Edward Mounier has a drawl; though educated at Weimar, he is a peer of France, and a baron, and an honorable judge at the law courts in Paris (1835, December). Will the reader believe me if I dare to add that I have no desire to be in the place of Messieurs Félix Faure and Mounier, peers of France and formerly my friends?

My grandfather, the affectionate and zealous friend of all young men who loved work, used to lend books to

⁹ Casimir Périer: son of a rich banker of Grenoble of whom and of whose family Stendhal gives a somewhat malicious account in Chapters VII and XLII, where he states that one of the sons was his model for the character of Valenod in *Le Rouge et le Noir*. Casimir Périer entered the Chamber of Deputies after the Restoration, and during the July Days exercised a moderating influence: he was a member of Louis Philippe's first cabinet and, though far from popular with the King, was called upon to form a Ministry in 1831. Stendhal despises him for serving his *bête noire*, Louis Philippe, and hates him for the strong measures of repression, both military and legislative, to which he resorted in order to keep order in those stormy days of strikes, outrages, and revolts; but the qualities of the Dauphiné character which Stendhal so much abhors were very useful to a minister in the perilous condition of France at that time, and Casimir Périer's administration was moderate and judicious.

Stendhal's estimate of Louis Philippe as being even more cunning than Casimir Périer is confirmed by so competent an authority as Queen Victoria, who writes in her *Letters* of his "tricks and overreachings" and how "in great as well as in small things [he] took a pleasure in being cleverer and more cunning than others, often when there was no advantage to be gained by it."

M. Mounier and support him against his father's disapproval. Sometimes, when passing down the Grande-rue, he would go into the father's shop and talk to him about his son. The old cloth-merchant, who had a lot of children, and thought only of what was useful, was bitterly grieved when he saw this son losing his time in reading.

Young Mounier's strong point was his character, but his enlightenment did not equal his firmness. My grandfather used to tell us, laughing, some years later, how Mme Borel, who was to become M. Mounier's mother-in-law, once came to buy some cloth. M. Mounier, as his father's assistant, unrolled the piece, made her handle the stuff, and added:

"This cloth is sold at twenty-seven livres the ell."

"Well, Monsieur, I will give you twenty-five for it," said Mme Borel.

Upon which M. Mounier rolled the piece of cloth up again and coldly put it back in its compartment.

"But, Monsieur, Monsieur," said Mme Borel in astonishment, "I would go up to twenty-five livres ten sous for it."

"Madame, an honest man abides by his word."

This woman of the middle classes was scandalized.

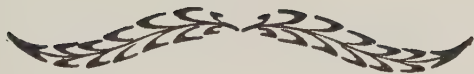
The same love of industry in the young which would be considered so wrong on the part of my grandfather nowadays, made him extend his patronage to young Barnave.¹

Barnave was our neighbor in the country, he being at

¹ Barnave: one of the chief orators of the Constituent Assembly; born at Grenoble of a Protestant family, and studied for the law. He was elected as a deputy to the States-General in 1789, and was in favor of a constitutional monarchy. On the flight and arrest of the royal family at Varennes, Barnave was one of the deputies sent to escort them back to Paris, and was won over to the royal cause. His sympathy with the royal family, and the attempts he made to save them, made him suspect, and in 1792 he was arrested. After more than a year's imprisonment, he was sent to the guillotine in 1793.

Saint-Robert and we at Saint-Vincent (on the road from Grenoble to Voreppe and Lyons). Séraphie detested him, and soon afterward rejoiced at his death and at the slender fortune which was left to his sisters, one of whom was called, it seems to me, Mme Saint-Germain. Every time we passed by Saint-Robert, Séraphie would say: "Ah, there is Barnave's house," and her attitude toward him was that of an offended zealot. My grandfather was very well received by the nobility, and was the oracle of the middle classes, and I think that the immortal Barnave's mother, who was grieved to see him neglecting his pleadings for Mably² and Montesquieu, was propitiated by my grandfather. In those days our fellow townsman Mably had a considerable reputation, and two years later his name was given to the rue aux Clercs.

² Mably: the Abbé Mably, moralist and historian (1709-1785), was the author of several works on history, law, and economics.



CHAPTER VI

After the death of my mother, my grandfather was in despair. I can see, but only now, that he must have been a man with a character of the type of Fontenelle, modest, prudent, discreet, and extremely amiable and amusing before the death of his dearly loved daughter. After that, he often retired into a discreet silence. He loved nobody in the world but that daughter and me.

His other daughter, Séraphie, annoyed and vexed him; he loved peace above all things, and she lived only for scenes. My good grandfather, thinking of his paternal authority, used to reproach himself sharply for not "showing his teeth" (a provincial expression; I keep them, with the intention of translating them afterward into Parisian French; I keep them for the present in order better to recall the details which throng back on me). M. Gagnon esteemed and feared his sister, who had preferred to him in her youth a brother who had died in Paris, a fact which the surviving brother had never forgiven her; but with his amiable and pacific character, in the style of Fontenelle, this was not at all apparent; I guessed it later.

M. Gagnon felt a sort of aversion from his son Romain Gagnon, my uncle, a brilliant young man of a perfect amiability of character.

It was the possession of this quality, it seems to me, that estranged the father and son; they were both of them, though in different ways, the most charming men in the town. My grandfather was full of moderation in his jests, and his cold, delicate wit might easily pass un-

perceived. He was, moreover, a prodigy of learning for those days (when the most comical ignorance flourished). The foolish or the envious (MM. Champel, Tournus [the cuckold], Tourte), in order to revenge themselves, were incessantly complimenting him on his memory. He knew, believed in, and quoted the approved authorities on every kind of subject.

"My son has read nothing," he used sometimes to say impatiently. Nothing could be truer, and yet it was impossible to be bored in a society where young M. Gagnon was present. His father had given him a charming apartment in his house, and made him an advocate. In this town with a Parlement, everybody loved chicanery, lived by chicanery, and made jokes about chicanery. I still know a number of jokes about "petitory" and "possessory" actions.

My grandfather gave his son board and lodging, plus an allowance of a hundred francs a month (an enormous sum at Grenoble in 1789) for his personal expenses; and my uncle used to buy embroidered coats costing a thousand *écus*, and to keep actresses.

I could only half grasp these things, which I divined from hints of my grandfather's. I suppose my uncle used to receive presents from his rich mistresses, and, with this money, dressed magnificently and kept his poorer mistresses. It should be known that in our province and at that time there was nothing wrong in taking money from Mme Dulauron or Mme de Marcieu or Mme de Sassenage, provided one spent it *hic et nunc* and did not make a purse. *Hic et nunc* is an expression which Grenoble owed to its Parlement.

It happened several times that my grandfather, on arriving at M. de Quinsonnas's house, or some other gathering, perceived a young man richly dressed, to whom everybody was listening; it was his son.

"My father did not know I had these clothes," my

uncle would say to me. "I made myself scarce as soon as possible, and went home to put on my modest evening coat again. When my father said to me: 'But do, to please me, tell me where you get the money for that style of dress,' I used to say: 'I gamble and am lucky at cards.' 'Well, then, why do you not pay your debts?' And Mme So-and-so wanted to see me in the beautiful coat which she had bought me!" my uncle would continue. "I got out of it by some evasive jest."

I do not know whether my reader of 1880 knows a novel which is still very famous today: the *Dangerous Intimacies* (*Liaisons dangereuses*) had been composed at Grenoble by M. Choderlos de Laclos, an officer in the artillery, and was a picture of the morals of Grenoble.

I even knew Mme de Merteuil; she was Mme de Montmart, who used to give me pickled walnuts. She was lame, and had the Drevon family's house at Le Chevallon, near the Church of Saint-Vincent, between Le Fontanil and Voreppe, but nearer to Le Fontanil. Only the width of the road separated the estate of Mme de Montmart (or, rather, rented by Mme de Montmart) from that of M. Henri Gagnon. The rich young girl who is obliged to retire to a convent must have been a Mlle de Blacons, of Voreppe.

This family is exemplary in its gloom, bigotry, well-regulated character, and Ultra opinions, or at least it was exemplary about 1814, when the Emperor sent me as a commissary to the 7th military division with the old Senator the Comte de Saint-Vallier. The Comte, who had been a Don Juan in my uncle's time, talked to me a great deal about the notorious follies which Mmes N. and N. (I forgot their names) had committed for my uncle. At that time I was consumed with the sacred fire and thought of nothing but the means of driving back the Austrians, or at least of preventing them from coming on so fast.

So then I saw this closing stage of Mme de Merteuil's

morals, in so far as a child of nine or ten years old, devoured by a passionate temperament, is capable of seeing such things, the true explanation of which everybody evades giving him.



CHAPTER VII

The family was composed, then, at the time of my mother's death, about 1790, of M. Gagnon, senior, aged sixty; Romain Gagnon, his son, twenty-five; Séraphie, his daughter, twenty-four; Elisabeth, his sister, sixty-four; Chérubin Beyle, his son-in-law, forty-three; Henri, the son of the latter, seven; Pauline, his daughter, four; Zénaïde, his daughter, two.

Such are the characters in the dismal drama of my youth, which recalls hardly anything to me but suffering and profound moral vexation. But let us examine the character of these persons a little.

My grandfather, Henri Gagnon (sixty years old); his daughter Séraphie, that she-devil whose age I never knew (she might have been twenty-two or twenty-four); his sister, Elisabeth Gagnon (sixty-four years old), a tall, thin, cold woman with a beautiful Italian face and a character of perfect nobility, noble with the refinement and conscientious scruples of a Spaniard. In this respect it was she who formed my heart, and it is to my Aunt Elisabeth that I owe the abominable delusions of that ideal of Spanish nobility under the influence of which I fell during the first thirty years of my life. I suppose that my Aunt Elisabeth, a rich woman (for Grenoble), had remained unmarried in consequence of some unhappy passion. I gathered something of the sort from the lips of my Aunt Séraphie in my early youth.

The family was composed, last of all, of my father.

Joseph Chérubin Beyle, an advocate at the provincial Parlement, an Ultra and a Chevalier of the Legion of

Honor, and deputy mayor of Grenoble, died in 1819, at the age of seventy-two, they said, which would mean that he was born in 1747. In 1790, then, he was forty-three years old.

He was a man extremely lacking in amiability, always thinking about the buying or selling of estates, excessively sharp, accustomed to selling to peasants and buying from them, the Dauphiné type *in excelsis*. His soul was all that was least Spanish and least full of exaggerated nobility, and so he was antipathetic to my Aunt Elisabeth. He was, moreover, excessively wrinkled and ugly, and he was awkward and silent with women, who were, however, necessary to him.

This latter quality had given him an insight into the *Nouvelle Héloïse* and the other works of Rousseau, of whom he never spoke except with adoration, though anathematizing him all the while for his impiety; for my mother's death had plunged him into the most absurd extremes of piety. He imposed upon himself the obligation of saying all the offices of a priest; it was even a question for three or four years of his taking orders, and he was probably restrained by the desire to bequeath me his office of advocate. He was on the point of becoming a consistorial: this was a distinction highly honored among the advocates, about which he spoke as a young lieutenant in the grenadiers speaks of the Cross of the Legion of Honor. He did not love me for myself personally, but as a son destined to carry on his family.

It would have been very hard for him to love me. Firstly, he saw clearly that I did not love him. I never spoke to him unless I was obliged to, for he was a stranger to all those fine literary and philosophic ideas which formed the basis of my questions to my grandfather, and of the kindly old man's excellent answers. I saw him very little. My passionate desire to leave Grenoble—that is to say, him—and my passion for mathematics—the only means I had of quitting that town which I abhorred, and which I still hate, for it is ther

that I learned to know men—my mathematical passion plunged me into a profound solitude from 1797 to 1799. I may say that I worked during these two years, and even during a part of 1796, as Michelangelo worked at the Sistine Chapel.

After my departure at the end of October 1799—I remember the date, because on the 18th of Brumaire (the 9th of November) I was at Nemours—I was nothing to my father but someone asking for money. The coolness increased uninterruptedly; he could not say a word which did not displease me. To sell a field to a peasant and haggle over it for a week, with the object of gaining three hundred francs, was a thing of which I had a horror; to him it was a passion.

Nothing could be more natural. His father, who bore, I believe, the great name of Pierre Beyle, died suddenly at Claix of the gout at the age of sixty-three. My father, at the age of eighteen (so it was about 1765), found himself the possessor of an estate at Claix, which brought in eight hundred or eighteen hundred francs (one or the other), the office of procurator, and ten sisters to settle in life; a mother, too, who was a rich heiress—that is to say, with a fortune of about sixty thousand francs—and, in virtue of being an heiress, possessed of a fiendish energy. For a long time she used still to box my ears as a child when I pulled the tail of her dog, Azor (a Bolognese dog with a long, silky coat). Money, then, was with good reason my father's chief thought, but for my part I have never thought of it except with disgust. The idea suggests cruel suffering to me, for possessing it gives me no pleasure, and being without it is a hideous misfortune.

Never, perhaps, did chance bring together two beings so fundamentally antipathetic as my father and me.

To this was due the absence of all pleasure during my childhood, from 1790 to 1799. This period, which everyone says to be that of the real pleasures of life, was to me, thanks to my father, nothing but a series of bitter

sorrows and disenchantments. Two devils were let loose on my wretched childhood, my Aunt Séraphie and my father, who toward 1791 became her slave.

The reader need not be afraid of the recital of my misfortunes; firstly, he can skip a few pages, a course which I beg him to take, for I am writing at random things that are perhaps very boring even for 1835; what will it be in 1880?

In the second place, I have hardly any recollection of the dismal period from 1790-5, during which I was a poor little persecuted baby, always scolded on every occasion, and protected only by a sage of the type of Fontenelle, who would not join battle for my sake; all the less so because in these battles his superior authority over them all made it incumbent upon him to raise his voice above theirs; now this was the thing of which he had the greatest horror, and my Aunt Séraphie, who, for I know not what reason, had taken a dislike to me, was also well aware of it.

Two or three weeks after the death of my mother, my father and I went back to sleep in the gloomy house, I in the little painted bed with bars like a cage, which stood in the recess by my father's bed. He dismissed his servants and took his meals at my grandfather's, who would never hear of any payment. I believe that it was out of his interest in me that my grandfather thus inflicted on himself the daily society of a man who was antipathetic to him.

The only bond between them was their sentiment of profound sorrow. On the occasion of my mother's death, my family severed all their social ties, and, to complete my boredom, from that time onward they lived in unbroken isolation.

M. Joubert, my pedant from the mountains (at Grenoble he would be called a *Bet*, which means a rough man born in the mountains of Gap), M. Joubert, who taught me Latin with incredible stupidity, making me

say by heart the rules in the primer (a thing which repelled my intelligence, and I was admitted to have a great deal), died. To attend his lessons I went to the little Place Notre-Dame, and I can say that I never passed by there without recalling my mother and the perfect gaiety of the life which I had led in her time; whereas now even to be kissed by my good grandfather disgusted me.

The pedant Joubert with the terrible face left me as a legacy the second volume of a French translation of Quintus Curtius, that dull Roman who wrote the life of Alexander.

This horrible pedant, a man five feet six high, terribly thin, and wearing a dirty, ragged, black frock-coat, was not, however, bad at heart.

But his successor, the Abbé Raillane, was in every sense of the word an utter rogue. I do not pretend that he had committed crimes; but it would be difficult to find a soul more hardened, more hostile to all that is honorable, more completely alien to every sentiment of humanity. He was a priest, a native of a village in Provence; he was little, thin, and very prim, with a shifty eye and abominable eyebrows.

He had just finished educating Casimir and Augustin Périer and their four or six brothers.

Casimir became a famous minister, in my opinion the dupe of Louis Philippe. Augustin, a man with the most pompous way of speaking, died a peer of France. Scipion died a little mad about 1806. Camille became an undistinguished prefect, and has just married, as his second wife, a very rich woman; he is a bit mad, like all his brothers. Joseph, the husband of a pretty and extremely affectionate woman, who had some celebrated love-affairs, has perhaps been the most reasonable of them all. Another of them, Amédée, I think, is supposed to have cheated at cards about 1815, but preferred to pass five years in the prison of Sainte-Pélagie rather than pay.

All these brothers were mad in the month of May. Well, I think they must have given a share of this advantage to our common tutor, the Abbé Raillane.

This man, through cunning, or priestly instinct, was a sworn enemy of logic and of all straightforward reasoning.

My father apparently engaged him out of vanity. "Milord" Périer, the father of the minister Casimir, had the reputation of being the richest man in the country. In fact, he had ten or eleven children, and left three hundred and fifty thousand francs to each of them. What an honor for an advocate of the Parlement to engage for his son the tutor leaving M. Périer's employment!

Perhaps M. Raillane was dismissed for some fault; what makes me suspect this nowadays is that there still remained three very young children in the Périer family: Camille, who was my age, Joseph, and Amédée, who were, I believe, much younger.

I have absolutely no knowledge of the financial arrangements made by my father with the Abbé Raillane. Any attention paid to money matters was considered low and contemptible in the extreme in my family. It was, so to speak, an offense against modesty to talk about money; money was, as it were, a sad necessity of life, unfortunately indispensable, like water-closets, but which one must never mention. One might, however, by way of exception, speak of the round sums paid for a piece of real estate; the words "real estate" were pronounced with respect.

"M. Bellier paid twenty thousand *écus* for his estate of Voreppe." "Pariset is costing our cousin Colomb more than twelve thousand *écus*" (of three livres). I do not know what was the origin of this disinclination to speak about money, which is so much opposed to the customs of Paris; but it gained complete mastery over my character. The only idea suggested to me by the sight of a

large sum of gold is that of the trouble of protecting it from thieves. This sentiment has often been taken for affectation, and I no longer talk about it.

All the honor, all the proud and elevated sentiments in our family, came from my Aunt Elisabeth; these sentiments reigned despotically over our house, and yet she very rarely spoke of them, perhaps once in two years; they generally arose out of a eulogy on her father. This woman, with her rare elevation of character, was adored by me, and might then have been sixty-five; she was always dressed with great neatness, and used expensive materials for her simple dress. You will quite understand that it is only nowadays, on thinking it over, that I am discovering these things. For instance, I do not know the faces of any of my relations, and yet their features are present before me down to the minutest detail. If I have some recollection of my excellent grandfather's face, it is because of the visit which I made to him when I was already an auditor, or assistant to the war commissaries; I have absolutely lost all memory of the date of this visit. My character did not mature till very late; that is how I now explain this failure to remember faces. Up to the age of twenty-five, nay, even now, I still have to keep myself well in hand so as not to be carried away by the sensation produced in me by things, but to judge them rationally, in the light of my experience. But what the devil does that matter to the reader? What does all this work of mine matter to him? And yet, if I do not get to the bottom of this character of Henri's, which is so difficult for me to know, I shall not be behaving like an honest author, trying to say all he knows about his subject. I beg my editor, if I ever have one, to cut these long-winded passages severely.

One day my Aunt Elisabeth Gagnon was grieving over the death of her brother, who died young in Paris; we were alone one day after dinner in her room looking

on the Place Grenette. Evidently this noble soul was answering her own thoughts, and, since she loved me, addressed her words to me for the sake of form.

"What character! [which meant: what strength of will]. What activity! Ah! What a difference!" (This meant: how different from this one, my grandfather Henri Gagnon.) And, immediately interrupting herself, and remembering before whom she was speaking, she added: "I have never said so much before."

I: "At what age did he die?"

Mlle Elisabeth: "At twenty-three."

The conversation lasted a long time; she began to talk about her father. Among innumerable details, which I have forgotten, she said:

"On such-and-such a date he wept with rage on hearing that the enemy was approaching Toulon."

(But when did the enemy approach Toulon? ¹ About 1736, perhaps, in the war in which took place the Battle of the Col de l'Assiette, of which I lately saw, in '34, an engraving interesting in its accuracy.)

He thought the militia should have been called up. Now nothing in the world could be more contrary to the sentiments of my grandfather Gagnon, a regular Fontenelle, the wittiest and least patriotic man I have ever known. Patriotism would have been to my grandfather a low distraction from his elegant literary ideas. My father would at once have calculated what he might have gained by it. My Uncle Romain would have said in alarm: "The devil! I may run some risk in this." My old aunt's heart and my own would have throbbed with interest.

Perhaps I anticipate matters a little in my own case, and am ascribing to myself at seven or eight the sentiments which I had at nine or ten. It is impossible for me to distinguish between my sentiments on the same matters at two periods in the past.

¹ "When did the enemy approach Toulon?" In 1744, during the War of the Austrian Succession.

Of one thing I am sure, and that is that the severe and forbidding portrait of my great-grandfather, in its gilt frame with great round ornaments six inches across, which almost frightened me, became dear and sacred to me as soon as I had learned with what brave and generous sentiments he had been inspired by the enemy's approach to Toulon.



CHAPTER VIII

On this occasion my Aunt Elisabeth told me that my great-grandfather had been born at Avignon, a city of Provence, "where oranges used to grow," as she said to me in a regretful tone, and much nearer to Toulon than Grenoble. You must know that the great splendor of the latter town consisted in sixty or eighty orange trees in square tubs, handed down, perhaps from the time of the Constable Lesdiguières, the last great personage produced by Dauphiné. On the approach of summer these were placed with great pomp in the neighborhood of the magnificent chestnut walk, also, I believe, planted by Lesdiguières. "So there is a country where orange trees really grow in the ground?" I said to my aunt. I realize now that without knowing it I was recalling to her an object of her eternal regret.

She told me that we drew our origin from a land even more beautiful than Provence (we, I mean to say, the Gagnons), though her grandfather's grandfather, in consequence of some disastrous occurrence, had come to take refuge at Avignon in the suite of some pope; that there he had been obliged to change his name a little and go into hiding, and that he had then lived by the profession of surgeon.

With what I know of Italy nowadays, I should translate this as follows: that a M. Guadagni or Guadanianno, having committed some little assassination in Italy, had come to Avignon about 1650 in the suite of some legate. What struck me very much then was that we had come (for I looked upon myself as a Gagnon,

and never thought of the Beyles without a repugnance which still lasts in 1835), that we had come from a land where orange trees really grew in the ground. What a land of delight, I thought!

What would tend to confirm me in this idea of our Italian origin is that the language of that country was in great honor in our family; a thing very remarkable in a middle-class family in 1780. My grandfather knew and honored Italian, my poor mother read Dante, a very difficult thing even in our day. M. Artaud, who has passed twenty years in Italy, has just published a translation of Dante; it contains not less than two mistranslations and one absurdity a page. Of all the Frenchmen of my acquaintance, two alone, M. Fauriel, who gave me the Arabic love-stories, and M. Delécluze, of the *Débats*, understand Dante, and yet all the scribblers in Paris incessantly take this great name in vain by quoting him and setting up to explain him. Nothing makes me more indignant.

My respect for Dante is of long growth; it dates from the copies which I found on the shelf of my father's library occupied by my poor mother's books, which were my sole consideration during the Raillane tyranny.

My horror of that man's profession and of what it was his profession to teach reached a point verging on mania.

Would anyone believe that only yesterday, the 4th of December 1835, on the way from Rome to Civitavecchia, I had occasion, without putting myself out, to do a very great service to a young lady whom I do not suspect of great severity? On the journey she discovered my name without any aid from me; she was the bearer of a letter of introduction to my secretary. She has very fine eyes, and these eyes looked at me with an expression which was far from cruel, during the last eight leagues of the journey. She begged me to find her an inexpensive lodging; in fact, it probably depended only on myself to have been well treated by her; but, as I have been writing this for the last week, the fatal memory of the

Abbé Raillane was aroused. The nose of this pretty Mme — of Lyons, aquiline, but a little too small, reminded me of that of the Abbé; after that it was impossible for me even to look at her, and I pretended to sleep in the railway carriage. Even after getting her a passage by my influence for eight *écus* instead of twenty-five, I hesitated to go and see the new quarantine station, so as not to be obliged to see her and receive her thanks.

As there is no consolation, nothing but what is ugly and disgusting in my memories of the Abbé Raillane, for twenty years at least I have averted my eyes in horror from the memory of that terrible period. This man ought to have turned me into a rogue; he was, I see now, a perfect Jesuit. He used to lead me aside during our walks along the Isère, from the Porte de la Graille to the confluence of the Drac, or simply to a little wood beyond the widest part of the island A, to explain to me that I was imprudent in my speech. "But, Monsieur," I used to say to him, in other words, "it is true; it is what I feel."

"Never mind, my little one, you should not say it; it is not fitting." If these maxims had had their effect, I should be rich today, for three or four times fortune has knocked at my door (I refused in May 1814 the directorship-general of provisions [wheat] for Paris, responsible to Count Beugnot, whose wife had the greatest friendship for me; after her lover, M. Pepin de Bellile, my intimate friend, I was perhaps the person she loved the best). I should be rich, then, but I should be a rogue; I should not have these charming visions of the beautiful which often fill my head at the age of fifty-two.

The reader perhaps thinks that I am trying to put off the fatal cup which consists in having to talk of the Abbé Raillane.

He had a brother, a tailor at the end of the Grand-rue, near the Place Claveyson, who was the personification of all that is despicable. One defect only was lacking in this Jesuit: he was not dirty; on the contrary, he

was very clean and neat. He had a taste for canaries; he used to breed them, and kept them with great cleanliness, but beside my bed. I cannot conceive how my father permitted anything so unhealthy.

My grandfather had never entered the house again after the death of his daughter; had he done so, he would never have allowed it. My father, Chérubin Beyle, as I have said, loved me as the perpetuator of his name, but in no way as a son.

The canaries' cage, made of wires attached to wooden supports, which were in their turn fixed to the wall by plaster clamps, might have been nine feet long by six feet high and four feet deep. In this space fluttered dismally, remote from the sun, thirty or so poor canaries of every color. When they were nesting, the Abbé used to feed them with yolk of egg, and of all that he used to do, this alone interested me. But these infernal birds used to wake me up at daybreak; soon afterward I used to hear the shovel of the Abbé, who kept up his fire with a care which I afterward found to be characteristic of Jesuits. But this aviary gave out a strong smell, and that two feet from my bed, and in a damp, dark room where the sun never shone in. We had no window looking on the Lamouroux Gardens; our only light was on sufferance (towns with a *Parlement* are full of legal words) and gave a brilliant light on the staircase L, which was shaded by a fine lime tree, although the staircase was at least forty feet above the ground. This lime tree must have been very tall.

The Abbé used to get angry, with the calm, gloomy, nasty anger of a phlegmatic diplomat, when I ate the dry bread which I had for tea near his orange trees. These orange trees were a regular mania of his, much more inconvenient even than his birds. Some of them were three inches and the others a foot high; they were placed on the window-sill O, where the sun came round for a short time during two summer months. The fateful Abbé pretended that the crumbs which fell from

our brown bread attracted the flies, which ate his orange trees. This Abbé would have given lessons in small-mindedness to the most middle-class townspeople (such as were known by the local name of *patets*, meaning persons who paid excessive attention to the smallest interests).

My companions, Chazel and Reytiers, were much less unfortunate than I. Chazel was a good fellow, already quite a big boy, whose father, a man of the South, I believe (which is equivalent to saying a frank, brusque, rough man), and a confidential clerk of M. Périér's, did not care much about Latin. Chazel came alone (without a servant) about ten o'clock, did his Latin exercise badly, and left at half past twelve; often he did not come in the afternoon.

Reytiers, an extremely handsome boy, as fair and shy as a girl, did not dare to look the terrible Abbé Raillane in the face. He was the only son of a father who was the most timid and religious of men. He used to arrive at eight o'clock under the severe escort of a servant, who came to fetch him as it struck twelve at Saint-André's Church (the fashionable church of the town, whose bells we heard very clearly). At two o'clock the servant brought Reytiers back, with his tea in a basket. In summer, toward five o'clock M. Raillane used to take us for a walk, in winter only rarely, and then at about three o'clock. Chazel, who was a big boy, was bored with the walk, and soon left us.

Our great ambition was to go in the direction of the island in the Isère: in the first place, the mountain, seen from there, looks delightful; and one of the literary faults of my father and M. Raillane was to exaggerate incessantly the beauties of nature (which their beautiful souls can have felt very little; they thought of nothing but making money). By dint of talking to us about the beauty of the rock of La Buisserate, the Abbé Raillane had made us look up at it. But it was a very different sight which made us love the bank near the island. It

was there that we poor prisoners saw the young people who enjoyed liberty, who came and went alone, and afterward bathed in the Isère and a little stream which flowed into it, called in the local dialect the Biole; an excess of happiness of which we could not perceive any possibility even in the remote future.

M. Raillane, exactly like a newspaper supporting the government of today, could talk to us of nothing but the dangers of liberty. He never saw a child bathing without foretelling that he would end by drowning himself, thereby doing us the service of turning us into cowards; and he succeeded perfectly in my case: I have never been able to learn to swim. When I was free, two years afterward, about 1795, I think, and then only by deceiving my parents and telling a fresh lie every day, I was already thinking of leaving Grenoble, at any price; I was in love with Mlle Kably, and swimming was no longer a matter that interested me enough to make me learn it. Every time I went into the water, Roland (Alphonse) or one of the strong ones used to duck me.

I have no record of any dates during the horrible Raillane tyranny; I became gloomy and hated everybody. My great unhappiness was at not being able to play with other children; my father, who was probably very proud of having a tutor for his son, feared nothing so much as to see me "going with common children," for such was the expression of the aristocrats of that time. One thing alone might provide me with a date: Mlle Marine Périer (sister of the minister Casimir Périer) came to see M. Raillane (who was perhaps her confessor) a short time before her marriage with that madman Camille Teisseire, a fanatical patriot who afterward burned his copies of Voltaire and Rousseau, and who in 1811, when he had become a *sous-préfet* by the influence of M. Crétet, his cousin, was so dumfounded at the favor which he saw me enjoying in the *salon* of the Comtesse Daru (on the ground floor overlooking the garden of

the Biron mansion, I think, now the offices of the Civil List, the last house on the left in the rue Saint-Dominique, at the corner of the boulevard des Invalides). I can still see his envious face and his awkward politeness to myself. Camille Teisseire had grown rich, or rather his father had grown rich, by manufacturing cherry brandy, a fact of which he was much ashamed.

By searching in the registers of births and deaths at Grenoble (which Louis XVIII called *Grelibre*) for the certificate of marriage of M. Camille Teisseire (rue des Vieux-Jésuites or Place Grenette, for his spacious house had two entrances) with Mlle Marine Périet, I should find the date of the Raillane tyranny.

I was gloomy, underhand, discontented. I was translating Virgil; the Abbé exaggerated the beauties of this poet to me, and I received his praises much as the poor Poles of today must receive the praises of Russian good nature in their venal gazettes. I hated the Abbé, I hated my father, the source of the Abbé's power, I hated still more the religion in whose name he tyrannized over me. I proved to my fellow slave, the timid Reytiers, that all the things which we were taught were stories. Where had I picked up these ideas? I do not know. We had a great illustrated Bible bound in green, with wood-engravings inserted in the text; nothing can be better for children. I remember that I was always looking out for absurdities in this poor Bible. Reytiers, more timid, and with more faith, adored by his father and mother (who was inches deep in rouge and had been a beauty), used to admit my doubts out of kindness to me.

We were translating Virgil, then, with great difficulty, when I discovered in my father's library a translation of Virgil in four octavo volumes, very well bound, by that rogue of an Abbé Desfontaines, I believe. I found the volume corresponding to the Georgics, and the second book, which we were murdering (we did not really know any Latin at all). I hid this blessed volume in the

water-closet, in a cupboard where they used to put the feathers of the fowls eaten in the house; and there, two or three times during our painful process of translation, we used to go and consult Desfontaines. It seems to me that the Abbé noticed it, thanks to the simplicity of Reytiers, and that there was an abominable scene. I became more and more gloomy, ill-tempered, and unhappy. I loathed everybody, and my Aunt Séraphie to a superlative degree. It was a year after my mother's death, about 1791 or 1792, it seems to me now, that my father fell in love with her; hence the interminable walks to Les Granges on which I was taken as third party, the precaution being taken of making me walk forty feet ahead as soon as we had passed the Porte de Bonne. This Aunt Séraphie had taken a dislike to me, I do not know why, and was constantly making my father scold me. I loathed them, and I must have shown it; for even now, when I have an aversion from anybody, the persons present notice it on the spot. I detested my youngest sister, Zénaïde (now Mme Alexandre Mallein), because she was petted by my father, who every evening lulled her to sleep on his knees, and was under the lofty patronage of Mlle Séraphie. I covered all the plaster in the house (and particularly the partitions) with caricatures of Zénaïde the "tell-tale." My sister Pauline (now Mme Périer-Legrange, and a widow) and I used to accuse Zénaïde of playing the part of a spy on us, and I really think there was some ground for it. I always dined with my grandfather, but we had finished dining as it struck a quarter past one at Saint-André's Church, and at two o'clock I had to leave the beautiful sunshine of the Place Grenette for the damp, cold rooms looking onto the courtyard of my father's house in the rue des Vieux-Jésuites, occupied by the Abbé Raillane. Nothing was more painful to me; as I was gloomy and underhand, I made plans for running away; but where could I have got the money?

One day my grandfather said to the Abbé Raillane:

"But, Monsieur, why teach this child the Ptolemaic system of the universe, which you know to be false?"

"But it explains everything; and besides, it is approved by the Church."

My grandfather could not stomach this answer, and often repeated it, laughing. He never became indignant at what was under other people's authority; now my education was under my father's authority, and the less M. Gagnon esteemed his knowledge, the more he respected his rights as a father.

But this reply of the Abbé's, often repeated by my grandfather, whom I adored, completed my development into a rabid freethinker, and a most gloomy creature besides. My grandfather knew astronomy, though he understood nothing of the calculations. We used to pass the summer evenings on the splendid terrace outside his apartment. There he showed me the Great Bear and the Little Bear, and talked poetically about the Chaldean shepherds and Abraham. I thus came to think highly of Abraham, and said to Reytiers: "He is not a rogue like the other characters in the Bible."

My grandfather possessed, or had borrowed from the public library of which he had been the promoter, a quarto copy of the *Travels of Bruce in Nubia and Abyssinia*. These travels were illustrated, and to this fact was due its great influence on my education.

I loathed everything that was taught me by my father and the Abbé Raillane. Now my father had made me learn by heart Lacroix's Geography, and the Abbé had continued this; I was forced to know it well, but I hated it.

Bruce, a descendant of the kings of Scotland, as my excellent grandfather told me, gave me a keen taste for all the sciences which he mentioned. Hence my love of mathematics, and hence ultimately that idea which I dare to say was worthy of a genius: "Mathematics may get me out of Grenoble."



CHAPTER IX

Chérubin Beyle, my father, was subtle (like a true man of Dauphiné), but, in spite of this, he was passionate too. His passion for Bourdaloue and Massillon had been succeeded by a passion for agriculture, which was later overthrown by the love of the trowel (or building), which he had always had, and last of all by Ultra opinions and a passion for administering the city of Grenoble in the interest of the Bourbons.¹ My father brooded night and day over whatever happened to be the object of his passion; he had a deal of shrewdness, and a long experience of the sharp practice of the inhabitants of Dauphiné, and from all this I should be inclined to conclude that he had talent. But I have no clearer idea of this than I have of his face.

My father took to going twice a week to Claix; this was a *demesne* (a provincial expression meaning a small estate) of five hundred acres, I think, situated to the south of the town, on the slope of the mountain, on the other side of the Drac. All the soil at Claix and Furonnières is dry, chalky, and full of stones. About 1750 a dissolute parish priest invented a way to cultivate the marsh to the west of the bridge at Claix. This marsh made the fortune of the neighborhood.

My father's house was two leagues from Grenoble. I have walked there and back perhaps a thousand times.

¹ "In the interest of the Bourbons": Chérubin Beyle was appointed deputy mayor of Grenoble in 1803, and retained his position for some years after the Restoration.

It was no doubt to this exercise that my father owed his perfect health, which he enjoyed up to the age of seventy-two, I think. A bourgeois of Grenoble is not respected unless he possesses a demesne. My father's wig-maker, Lefèvre, had a demesne at Corenc, and often missed his clients "because he had gone to Corenc," an excuse which was always well received. We sometimes took a short cut by crossing the Drac at the ferry of Seyssins, at the point A.

My father was so full of his new passion that he talked to me about it incessantly. He "sent for" (a provincial expression, apparently), he sent for from Paris, or from Lyons, the *Library of Agriculture, or Husbandry*, which was illustrated; I often turned over the pages of this book, which was the cause of my many visits to Claix (I mean, to our house at Furonnières) on Thursday, which was a holiday. I walked round the fields with my father and listened unwillingly while he unfolded his plans; all the same, his pleasure at having somebody to listen to his romancing, which he called his calculations, several times had the result that I did not return to town till Friday; sometimes we started as early as Wednesday evening.

I disliked Claix because I was always bombarded with agricultural projects there; but I soon discovered a great compensation. I found a way of stealing volumes of Voltaire, in the forty-volume edition, perfectly bound in marbled calf, which my father had in a glass bookcase at Claix (his demesne). There were forty volumes, I think, very close together; I took out two and spread out the others a little so that it was not apparent. Besides, this dangerous book had been placed on the highest shelf of the cherry-wood bookcase with a glass front, which was often locked.

By the grace of God, even at that age the illustrations seemed to me absurd, and what illustrations! Those of the Pucelle.

This miracle almost made me think that God had in-

tended me to have good taste and to write one day the *History of Painting in Italy*.

We always passed the holidays at Claix—that is to say, the months of September and August. My tutors complained that I forgot all my Latin during these seasons of pleasure.

There was nothing I hated so much as when my father used to call our walks to Claix “our pleasures.” I was like a galley slave forced to give the name of “his pleasures” to a system of chains a little less heavy than the others.

I was indignant, and, I think, very ill-natured and unjust to my father and the Abbé Raillane. I confess, but even in 1835 it is by a great effort of reason, that I cannot judge these two men. They poisoned my childhood, using the term “poisoned” in its full force. They had severe faces, and constantly prevented me from exchanging a word with a child of my own age. It was not until the period of the central schools (that admirable work due to M. de Tracy) that I entered the society of children of my own age, but without the gaiety and lightheartedness of childhood; I came into it underhand, ill-natured, filled with thoughts of vengeance at the slightest blow, which produced the same effect on me as a slap in the face does on a man; in fact, everything but a traitor.

The great misfortune of the Raillane tyranny was that I felt my unhappiness. I constantly saw children of my age passing across the Place Grenette, walking or running together; now this is a thing that I was not once allowed to do. When I showed the grief by which I was devoured, they would say to me: “You shall go for a drive,” and Mme Périer-Lagrange (my brother-in-law’s mother), the most dismal figure, took me in the carriage when she went out for a constitutional; she scolded me at least as much as the Abbé Raillane, she was unsympathetic and pious, and had, like the Abbé, one of those inflexible faces which never smile. What a substitute for

a walk with little rascals of my own age! Will anyone believe it?—I have never played at marbles (*gobilles*, as they were called), and I had a top only thanks to the intercession of my grandfather, on which occasion his daughter Séraphie made a scene.

So I was very sly and ill-natured when, in the fine library at Claix, I made the discovery of a *Don Quixote* in French. This book had illustrations, but it looked old, and I abhorred all that was old, for my relations prevented me from seeing young people, and they seemed to be extremely old. But at last I managed to understand the pictures, which seemed to me to be funny: Sancho Panza, mounted on his good little kid, is held up by four stakes; Gines de Panamona has taken away the ass.

Don Quixote made me die with laughing. Kindly consider that since the death of my poor mother I had not laughed; I was the victim of the most relentlessly aristocratic and religious education. My tyrants had not flagged for a moment. All invitations were refused. I often surprised them in discussions in which my grandfather was of opinion that I should be allowed to accept. My Aunt Séraphie opposed this in terms insulting to me; my father, who was under her thumb, made jesuitical replies to my grandfather, which I knew would bind him to nothing. My Aunt Elisabeth shrugged her shoulders. When some plan for an outing survived one of these discussions, my father used to make the Abbé Raillane intervene with some exercise which I had not finished the day before, and which had to be done at the very time fixed for the outing.

You can imagine the effect of *Don Quixote* in the midst of all this horrible gloom! The discovery of this book, which I read under the second lime tree of the avenue, over by the flower bed, which was sunk a foot deep—and that is where I used to sit—perhaps marks the greatest epoch in my life.

Will it be believed?—my father, seeing me exploding with laughter, came and scolded me, threatening to take away the book, which he did several times, and carried me off into his fields to explain to me his plans for “reparations,” as he called them (improvements, or amendments).

Disturbed even in reading *Don Quixote*, I hid in the arbor, a little summerhouse of green boughs at the eastern extremity of the *clos* or little park surrounded with walls.

I found an illustrated Molière; the pictures seemed to me ridiculous, and I understood nothing but *L'Avare*. I found the comedies of Destouches, and one of the most ridiculous touched me to tears. It was a story of love mingled with generosity; that was my weak point. I search in vain in my memory for the title of this comedy, obscure even among the obscure comedies of this undistinguished diplomatist. *The Drum by Night*, in which is found an idea copied from the English, amused me very much.

I find it established as a fact in my head that from the age of seven I had resolved to write comedies, like Molière. Only ten years ago I still remembered how this resolution came about.

My grandfather was charmed with my enthusiasm for *Don Quixote*, which I related to him, for I told him almost everything; this excellent man of sixty-five was in fact my only companion.

He lent me, unknown to his daughter Séraphie, the *Orlando Furioso*, translated, or I rather think adapted, from Ariosto by M. de Tressan (whose son, now a brigadier general, and in 1820 quite an undistinguished Ultra, but in 1788 a charming young man, had had so great a part in making me learn to read, by promising me a little book full of pictures, which he never gave me. This broken promise shocked me greatly).

Ariosto formed my character. I fell madly in love with

Bradamante, whom I imagined as a big young woman of twenty-four with charms of the most dazzling whiteness.

I had a horror of all those low, bourgeois details made use of by Molière to reveal his thought. These details reminded me too much of my unhappy life. Less than three days ago (December 1835), when two middle-class acquaintances of mine were about to enact between themselves a comic scene of petty dissimulation and half-serious quarreling, I walked ten feet away so as not to hear. I have a horror of those things, which has prevented me from gaining experience. This is no small misfortune.

Everything that is low and mean in the middle-class style reminds me of Grenoble; all that recalls Grenoble fills me with horror; no, "horror" is too fine a word: it makes me sick.

Grenoble is to me like the memory of an abominable attack of indigestion; there is nothing dangerous in it, but it is utterly disgusting. Everything that is irretrievably mean and base, everything that is hostile to the slightest impulse of generosity, all that rejoices at the misfortunes of a man who loves his country or is generous, that is what Grenoble means to me.

Nothing has astonished me so much in my travels as to hear officers of my acquaintance saying that Grenoble was a charming town, sparkling with wit, and where "the pretty women did not forget themselves." The first time I heard this remark—it was at table in the house of General Moncey (now a marshal and Duke of Conegliano) in 1802 at Milan or Cremona—I was so amazed that I asked him for details across the table; I was then a rich sub-lieutenant with a hundred and fifty francs a month, and was full of illusions. My loathing for the state of perpetual nausea and indigestion from which I had only just escaped was at its height. The staff officer maintained his contention very well. He had passed fifteen or eighteen months at Grenoble, and

maintained that it was the pleasantest town in the province. He mentioned to me Mesdames Menand-Dulauron, Piat-Desvials, Tournus, Duchamps de Montmort, the Mlles Rivière (daughters of the innkeeper in the rue Montorge), the Mlles Bailly, the milliners, who were friends of my uncle, the MM. Drevon, Drevon the elder, and Drevon *la Pareille*, M. Dolle of the Porte de France, and, in aristocratic circles (an expression of 1800, later replaced by Ultra, and then by Legitimist), the Chevalier de Marcieu and M. de Bailly.

Alas! I had hardly heard these charming names! My relations mentioned them only in order to deplore their folly, for they found fault with everything. Their views were jaundiced; I must insist upon this in order to find a reasonable explanation of my unhappiness. On the death of my mother, my family in their excess of despair had broken off all their social relations. My mother was the life and soul of the family; my father, gloomy, shy, spiteful, and unamiable, had the character of a Genevan (where they always calculate and never laugh), and had never had any social relations, it seems to me, except through my mother. My grandfather, a charming man and a man of the world, whose conversation was more sought after than that of anyone in the town, and that by all classes, from Mme Barthélemy, the witty shoemaker, to the Baron des Adrets, with whom he continued to dine once a month, was heart-broken at the death of the only creature whom he loved; and seeing that he had got to the age of sixty, broke with the world through weariness of life. My Aunt Elisabeth alone, who was independent and even rich (or what was called rich in Grenoble in 1782), had kept up her relations with some houses, where she went for a game of cards in the evenings (the hours before supper, from seven till nine o'clock). She went out like this two or three times a week, and sometimes, when my father was at Claix, out of pity for me, and in spite of her respect for paternal rights, she used to pretend that she needed me and took

me as her escort to see Mlle Simon, in the Maison Neuve des Jacobins, who used to rouge an inch thick. My good aunt even got me an invitation to a great supper-party given by Mlle Simon. I still remember the brilliant lights and the magnificence of the table appointments; in the middle of the table there was a centerpiece with silver statues. The day after, my Aunt Séraphie denounced me to my father, and there was a scene. These quarrels were very polite in form, but in the course of them cutting words were said of a sort which are never forgotten; and they formed the sole amusement of that sullen family into which ill luck had thrown me. How I envied the nephew of Mme Barthélemy, our shoemaker!

I used to suffer, but I did not see the causes of all this; I put it all down to the malice of my father and Séraphie. To be just, I ought to have seen them as middle-class people puffed up with pride, who wished to give their "one and only son," as they called me, an aristocratic education. These were ideas far beyond my years; besides, who could have suggested them to me? All the friends I had were Marion, the cook, and Lambert, my grandfather's manservant; and Séraphie was constantly calling me away whenever she heard me laughing with them in the kitchen. In their dark depression I was their sole occupation; they dignified this vexation by the name of education, and were probably quite sincere. By this continual contact my grandfather inspired me with his reverence for literature. Horace and Hippocrates were men of a very different kind, in my eyes, from Romulus, Alexander, and Numa; M. de Voltaire was quite a different person from that idiot Louis XVI, whom he made fun of, or the libertine Louis XV, whose vile morals he reprobated. He mentioned "the du Barry" with disgust, and the absence of the word Madame, after the habits of politeness, to which I was accustomed, made a great impression on me; I was horrified at these creatures. We always said "M. de Voltaire," and my grandfather never

mentioned this name without a smile of mingled respect and affection.

Soon politics came between us. My family was one of the most aristocratic (in sentiment) in the town, which meant that I immediately felt myself to be a fanatical republican. I saw the splendid regiments of dragoons go by on their way to Italy.² Some of them were always quartered on us, and my eyes devoured them; now, my parents loathed them. Soon the priests began to go into hiding; there were always one or two of them hiding in our house. The greed of one of the first of them who came, a fat man whose eyes used to start out of his head when he was eating sucking-pig, gave me a shock of disgust (we had some excellent pickled sucking-pig, which I used to go and fetch from the cellar with Lambert, the manservant; it was kept in a pan hollowed out of a rock). At home we always ate very nicely, and with elaborate refinement. It was impressed on me, for instance, not to make a noise with my mouth. Most of these priests were men of the people, and used to make a noise by clicking their tongue against their palate. They broke their bread untidily; and it needed no more than this to give me a horror of these persons, who sat at table on my left.

One of our cousins (M. Senterre) was guillotined at Lyons, and the gloom of my family, their hatred and discontent with everything, were redoubled.

Formerly, when I used to hear people speak of the simple joys of childhood, of the mad pranks proper to this age, of the happiness of early youth, I was sad at heart. I knew nothing of all these things; and, what is more, that age was for me a period of continuous unhappiness and hatred, and of a longing for vengeance which was always impotent. All my misfortune can be summed up in a few words: I was never allowed to speak to a child of my own age. And my relations, who

² "On their way to Italy": the first Italian campaign (1793-7) in the French Revolutionary Wars.

were very bored in consequence of their complete separation from society, honored me with their unremitting attention. For these two reasons, at that time of life which is so gay for other children I was ill-natured, gloomy, unreasonable, in a word, a slave, in the worst sense of the word; and little by little I acquired the sentiments of my condition. The scraps of happiness at which I could snatch were preserved by lying. In a different way, I was exactly like the people of Europe at the present day; my tyrants always used toward me the gentle language of the most tender solicitude, and religion was their most firm ally. I had to bear with continual homilies on paternal love and the duties of children. One day, bored by my father's speeches, I said to him: "If you love me so much, give me five sous a day and let me live as I like. However, you can be quite sure of one thing: as soon as I am old enough, I shall enlist."

My father turned on me as if he would annihilate me. He was beside himself. "You are nothing but an undutiful wretch," he said. Does it not remind one of the Emperor Nicholas and the municipality of Warsaw, which is being so much talked about at the moment I am writing (December 7, 1835, at Civit -Vecchia)? So true it is that all tyrannies are alike.

By pure chance, it seems to me, I did not remain ill-natured, but simply disgusted for the rest of my life with middle-class people, Jesuits, and hypocrites of every kind. I was perhaps cured of my ill nature by my successes of 1797, '98, and '99, and by the consciousness of my powers. In addition to my other fine qualities, I was insufferably proud.

To tell the truth, when I think hard about it, I have not cured myself of my unreasonable horror of Grenoble; in the truest sense of the word, I have forgotten it. The splendid memories of Italy and Milan have effaced it all.

The only thing remaining to me from it is a remarkable gap in my knowledge of men and things. All the

details which form the life of Chrysale in the *École des femmes*:

“*Et hors un gros Plutarque à mettre mes rabats,*”³

fill me with horror. If I may be allowed a comparison as disgusting as my sensation, it is like the smell of oysters to a man who has had a frightful indigestion after eating them.

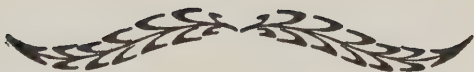
All the details which formed Chrysale's life are replaced in me by the romantic. I believe that this dark spot in my telescope has been a good thing for the characters in my novels; there is a sort of middle-class meanness which they cannot have, and for the author it would be like talking Chinese, which he does not know. This term “middle-class meanness” expresses a subtle shade of meaning; it will perhaps be very obscure in 1880. Thanks to the newspapers, the provincial bourgeois is becoming rare; people no longer have “the manners of their condition.” A fashionable young man in Paris, whom I met in very gay society, was extremely well dressed, without affectation, and spent an income of eight or ten thousand francs. One day I asked: “What is his profession?”

“He is a solicitor with a large practice,” I was told.

So I will quote, as an example of middle-class meanness, the style of my excellent friend M. Fauriel (of the Institute) in his excellent life of Dante, published in 1834 in the *Revue de Paris*. But alas! where will these things be in 1880? Some intelligent man who writes well will have availed himself of the researches of the excellent Fauriel, and the works of this good, conscientious bourgeois will be completely forgotten. He was in his time the handsomest man in Paris. Mme Condorcet (Sophie Grouchy), who had a great eye for men, took possession of him, and the bourgeois Fauriel had the stupidity to love her; at her death, about 1820, I think,

³ “Save the great Plutarch where I press my bands.” The quotation is from *Les Femmes Savantes*, II, vii.

she left him an income of twelve hundred francs, as if he had been her footman. He was deeply humiliated. I said to him, when he gave me ten pages of Arabic adventures for my book on *L'Amour*: "If you have to deal with a princess, or a woman who is too rich, you must beat her, or love becomes extinct." This remark horrified him, and he no doubt repeated it to little Miss Clarke, who is shaped like a mark of interrogation, like Pope. The result was that shortly afterward she administered a reprimand to me by the mouth of one of her stupid friends (M. Augustin Thierry, a Member of the Institute), and I left her. There was a pretty woman in this set, Mme Belloc, but she used to make love with another note of interrogation, dark and bent crooked, Mlle de M—; and, really, I approve of these poor women.



CHAPTER X

My Master Durand

I can find no trace in my memory of the way in which I was delivered from the Raillane tyranny. That rogue ought to have turned me into an excellent Jesuit, worthy to succeed my father, or a debauched soldier given over to women and wine. As in the case of Fielding, my temperament would have absolutely drawn a veil over the baser side of things. So then I should have been one or the other of these amiable things if it had not been for my excellent grandfather, who, without knowing it, inspired me with his worship of Horace, Sophocles, Euripides, and polite letters. Fortunately he despised all the dissolute writers who were his contemporaries, and I was not corrupted by the Marmontels, Dorats, and other riff-raff. For some unknown reason he was constantly protesting how much he respected the priests, while in reality he had a horror of them, as of something foul. Seeing them enthroned in his drawing-room by his daughter Séraphie and my father, his son-in-law, he was perfectly polite to them, as to everybody. In order to talk about something, he would talk about literature—for instance, about the sacred authors, although he was not at all fond of them. But in spite of his courtesy, he found the greatest difficulty in the world in concealing the deep disgust caused him by their ignorance. “What! they are ignorant even of the Abbé Fleury, their own

historian!" I once caught this remark which fell from him, and it redoubled my confidence in him.

I discovered soon after that he very rarely went to confession. He was extremely polite toward religion, rather than a believer. He would have been very religious if he had been able to believe that he would meet his daughter Henriette in heaven (the Duc de Broglie said: "I feel as if my daughter is in America"); but he was merely depressed and silent. As soon as anybody came in, he would talk and tell stories out of politeness.

Perhaps M. Raillane was obliged to go into hiding for refusing the oath to the Civil Constitution of the Clergy.¹ However that may be, his removal was the greatest event possible for me, and I have no memory of it.

This constitutes a defect in my mind of which I have discovered several examples since, three years ago, on the promenade of San Pietro in Montorio (on the Janiculum), the illuminating idea came to me that I was soon going to be fifty, and that it was time to think of my departure and, before this, to give myself the pleasure of looking backward for a little. I have no memory of the periods or moments in which my feelings have been too acute. One of my reasons for believing myself to be brave is that I remember with perfect distinctness the slightest circumstances of the duels in which I have found myself involved. In the army, when

¹ By this civil constitution of the clergy, which was voted early in 1790, the whole of the organization of the Catholic Church in France was abolished by law. By the new constitution it was enacted, among other things, that the priests and bishops were to be elected, Catholics and non-Catholics being equally permitted to vote; further, Catholics and non-Catholics alike were forbidden to acknowledge any ecclesiastical jurisdiction outside France. It was therefore impossible for Catholics believing in the supremacy of the Pope to accept this constitution; and when it was further enacted that all beneficed clergy must take an oath to observe it, the majority of them refused to do so, and were consequently deprived of their benefices.

it was raining and I was walking in the mud, there was none to spare of this bravery; but when I had not been soaked during the night before, and when my horse was not slipping under me, the most perilous rashness was for me, literally, a real pleasure. My steady companions became serious and pale, or else very red. Mathis became more gay and Forisse more steady. Just as now I never think about the possibility of needing a thousand francs, which seems, however, to be the dominant idea, the chief thought, of my friends of my own age, who enjoy a degree of comfort which is quite beyond me (for instance, MM. Besan, Kolon). But I am wandering from the point. The great difficulty of writing these Memoirs is that of retaining and writing nothing but just those recollections relating to the period which I am arresting in its flight; for instance, I am now dealing with the time which I passed under the tutor Durand, a time which was evidently a less unhappy one.

He was an old fellow of perhaps forty-five, fat and round in every way, who had a very nice big son of eighteen, whom I admired from a distance, and who was later, I think, in love with my sister. Nothing could have been less jesuitical and sly than poor M. Durand; moreover, he was polite, and dressed with strict economy, but never dirtily. It is true he did not know a word of Latin, but neither did I, and we were not likely to quarrel about that.

I knew by heart the *Selectæ e profanis* [select passages from the profane writers], and especially the story of Androcles and his lion; I also knew the Old Testament, and perhaps a little Virgil and Cornelius Nepos. But if I had been given leave to take a week's holiday, written in Latin, I should not have understood a word of it. The wretched Latin written by the moderns, the *De Viris illustribus*, in which Romulus, of whom I was very fond, was talked about, was unintelligible to me. Well, well! M. Durand was the same; he knew by heart the authors whom he had been expounding for twenty

years, but, my grandfather having tried once or twice to consult him on some difficulty in his Horace which was not explained by Jean Bond (this word delighted me; in the midst of so much boredom, what a joy to be able to laugh at his name and call him *Jambon* [the French for "ham"]!), M. Durand did not even understand what the discussion was about.

The method, then, was pitiable, and, if I wanted to, I could teach Latin in eighteen months to a child of ordinary intelligence. But was it nothing to have got into the habit of enduring hardship for two hours every morning and three hours every afternoon? It is a great question. (About 1819 I taught English in twenty-six days to M. Antonio Clerichetti, of Milan, who suffered from a stingy father. On the thirtieth day he sold to a bookseller his translation of the cross-questioning of the Princess of Wales [Caroline of Brunswick], a notorious woman of pleasure whom her husband, a king, lavishing millions in order to carry his point, could not convict of having made him what ninety-five husbands out of a hundred are.)

So then I have no memory of the event which separated me from M. Raillane.

After this unceasing misery, due to the tyranny of that spiteful Jesuit, I see myself suddenly installed at my excellent grandfather's, sleeping in a little trapezium-shaped closet next to his bedroom, and taking Latin lessons from good old Durand, who came, it seems to me, twice a day, from ten to eleven, and from two to three o'clock. My relations still held fast to the principle of not letting me have any communication with "common people's children." But M. Durand's lessons took place in the presence of my excellent grandfather, in winter in his room, at the point M, in summer in the big drawing-room next to the terrace, at M, sometimes at M'', in an antechamber through which hardly anyone ever passed.

The memories of the Raillane tyranny filled me with

horror up till 1814; about this time I forgot them, and the events of the Restoration absorbed all my horror and disgust. It is with this last sentiment alone that I am inspired by my memories of my tutor Durand at home, for I also went to his lessons at the Central School; but then I was happy, comparatively at least. I was beginning to be conscious of the beautiful landscape formed by the view of the hills of Eybens and Echirolles, and by the beautiful English meadow of the Porte de Bonne, which was commanded by the windows of the School, luckily situated on the third floor of the college; the rest was being repaired.

It appears that in winter M. Durand came to give me lessons from seven till eight o'clock in the evening. At least, I can see myself at a little table lighted by a candle; M. Durand sitting in a line with the family, ranged like a string of onions before my grandfather's fire, and by a half-turn to the right coming face to face with the little table where I was placed at H.

It is there that M. Durand began to expound to me the *Metamorphoses* of Ovid. I can still see him, as well as the yellow or boxwood color of the cover of the book. It seems to me that there was a dispute between Séraphie, who was more diabolically energetic than ever, and her father, because the subject was too gay. Out of love for fine literature he took a firm stand, and instead of the gloomy horrors of the Old Testament, I had the loves of Pyramus and Thisbe, and, above all, Daphne changed into a laurel. Nothing amused me so much as this story. For the first time in my life, I understood that it might be agreeable to know Latin, which had been my torment for so many years.

But here the chronology of this important narrative demands: "For how many years?"

Really, I do not know in the least; I had begun Latin at the age of seven, in 1790. I suppose that the year VII of the Republic corresponds to 1799, on account of the rebus,

Lancette
Laitue
Rat,²

posted up at the Luxembourg with reference to the Directory.

It seems to me that, in the year V, I was at the Central School.

I had been there for a year, for we occupied the big mathematical classroom on the first floor, when the assassination of Roberjot occurred at Rastadt.³ It was perhaps in 1794 that I was construing the *Metamorphoses* of Ovid. My grandfather sometimes allowed me to read the translation by M. Dubois-Fontanelle, who was afterward my professor.

It seems to me that the death of Louis XVI on the 21st of January 1793 took place during the Raillane tyranny. It is a ridiculous thing, which posterity will scarcely believe, but my family—who, though middle-class, imagined themselves to be on the fringe of the nobility—and my father, above all—who imagined himself to be a ruined nobleman—read all the newspapers and followed the King's trial as they might have followed that of an intimate friend or a relation.

The news of his condemnation arrived; my family were absolutely in despair. "But they will never dare to carry out this infamous judgment," they said. "Why not," I thought, "if he has been a traitor?"

I was in my father's study, in the rue des Vieux-Jésuites, about seven in the evening; the darkness was dense, and I was reading by the light of a lamp, separated from my father by a very big table. I was pretending to work, but I was reading the Abbé Prévost's

² "Lancette, Laitue, Rat": the punning equivalent of "*l'an sept les tue-ra*," i.e., "the year seven will be the end of them."

³ Roberjot was one of the French plenipotentiaries sent to the Congress of Rastadt (1797-9) who were assassinated as they were leaving the town on the break-up of the Congress. The motive of this outrage and the persons responsible for it have never been established with any certainty.

Memoirs of a Man of Quality, of which I had discovered a copy all ruined by age. The house was shaken by the mail-coach arriving from Lyons and Paris.

"I must go and see what those monsters have done," said my father, and got up. I dearly loved our regiments, whom I used to see from my grandfather's windows going by across the Place Grenette, and I imagined that the King wanted them to be beaten by the Austrians (it will be seen that, though hardly ten, I was not very far from the truth). But I must confess that the interest taken in Louis XVI's fate by M. Rey, the Vicar-General, and the other priests who were friends of the family, would have been enough to make me wish for his death. Thanks to a verse of a song which I used to sing when I was not afraid of being heard by my father or my Aunt Séraphie, I then regarded it as a strict duty to die for one's country. What was the life of a traitor, who by a secret letter could have one of those fine regiments slaughtered, which I used to see passing across the Place Grenette? I was judging the issue between my family and myself when my father returned. I can still see him in his long white quilted coat, which he had not taken off to go a few steps from the door.

"It is over," he said with a heavy sigh. "They have assassinated him."

I was seized by one of the most acute sensations of joy which I have ever felt in my life. The reader will perhaps think that I am cruel, but what I was at ten, I still am at fifty-two.

When in December 1830 that insolent scoundrel Peyronnet and the other signatories of the Ordinances⁴ were not condemned to death, I said of the middle classes of Paris: "They mistake the enfeeblement of their spirit for

⁴These were the famous ordinances of July 1830, by which Charles X, who was at loggerheads with the Chamber, tried to override the constitution and rule by royal decree. The immediate result was the July Revolution and the abdication of Charles X.

civilization and generosity." After such weakness, how could anyone dare to condemn a mere murderer to death?

It seems to me that the events of 1835 justified my presentiments of 1830.

I was so ecstatic at this great act of national justice that I could not go on reading my novel, which is certainly one of the most touching in existence. I hid it, and placed before me the serious work, probably Rollin, which my father was making me read, and I shut my eyes so as to be able to enjoy this great event in peace. It is exactly what I should do again today, with the proviso that, apart from an urgent duty, nothing could persuade me to see the traitor who was sent to his death in his country's interest. I could fill ten pages with the details of this evening, but if the readers of 1880 are as degenerate as the good society of 1835, the scene, as well as the hero, will inspire them with a sentiment of profound aversion, going almost as far as what pasteboard souls call horror. For my part, I should be much sorrier for a murderer condemned to death without absolutely sufficient proof, than for a king in the same situation. The death of a king is always useful *in terrorem*, and to prevent the strange abuses into which those people are thrown by the utter madness produced by absolute power. (Think of the love of Louis XV for the recently filled graves in country churchyards which he saw from his carriage while driving in the neighborhood of Versailles. Think of the present madness of the little Queen Dona Maria of Portugal.)

The page which I have just written would greatly scandalize even my friends of 1835. I was in disgrace for my hardheartedness at Mme Bernonde's in 1829 because I wished the death of the Duke of Bordeaux.⁵ Even M.

⁵ Duke of Bordeaux: the last of the elder branch of the Bourbons, more usually known as the Comte de Chambord. He was the posthumous child of the Duc de Berry, younger son of Charles X, who was assassinated in 1820, and himself died in 1883.

Mignet (now a Councillor of State) was horrified at me, and the mistress of the house, whom I liked because she resembled Cervantes, never forgave me; she said that I was utterly immoral, and was scandalized in 1833, when taking the cure at Aix, because the Countess C——al undertook to defend me. I may say that I am absolutely indifferent to the approval of persons whom I regard as weak. I look upon them as mad, I see clearly that they do not grasp the problem.

At any rate, supposing that I am cruel: well, yes, I am, and this is not the worst that you will see of me if I continue to write.

I conclude from this recollection, which is so present to my mind, that in 1793, forty-two years ago, I set out on the quest for happiness precisely as I do today, or, in more ordinary terms, my character was exactly the same as it is today. All compromise, when it is a question of one's country, still seems to me to be puerile.

I should say criminal, if it were not for my boundless contempt for the weak. (Example: M. Félix Faure, peer of France and First President of the Courts of Law, talking to his son at Saint-Ismier, in the summer of 1828, of the death of Louis XVI: "He was put to death by wicked men." It is this same man who today, in the House of Peers, is condemning the young fools, deserving of respect, who are called the April conspirators.⁶ For my part, I would condemn them to stay for a year

⁶ April conspirators: the disorders of the early years of Louis Philippe's reign culminated, in April 1834, in a series of armed risings in Paris, Lyons, Marseilles, Grenoble, etc. The leaders were all prominent republicans and socialists; the movement was avowedly directed from the republican headquarters; and it was not put down without sharp fighting and considerable loss of life. But after its suppression and the severe sentences passed on the arrested leaders—whose trial did not take place till May 1835—there were no more serious republican risings during the July Monarchy. It may be added that Godefroi Cavaignac, one of the leaders of these "young fools," was then aged thirty-four and had taken part in several risings; and Caussidière was twenty-seven. Cavaignac and two others managed to escape to England.

at Cincinnati [America], during which year I would allow them two hundred francs a month.) The only memory of mine which is equally distinct is that of my first communion, which my father made me celebrate at Claix, in the presence of Charbonot, the pious carpenter of Cossey, about 1795.

As in 1793 the mail took five good days, and perhaps six, to come from Paris to Grenoble, the scene in my father's study took place perhaps on the 28th or 29th of January, at seven o'clock in the evening. At supper my Aunt Séraphie made a scene about my abominable nature, etc. I looked at my father. He did not open his mouth, apparently lest he might drive both himself and me to the utmost extremes. My father, as a Dauphiné man, had too fine perceptions not to divine, even in his study (at seven o'clock), the sensations of a child of ten.

At twelve I was a prodigy of learning for my age, and was constantly putting questions to my excellent grandfather, whose joy it was to answer me. I was the only creature to whom he would mention my mother. Nobody in the family dared to speak to him about this dearly beloved being. At the age of twelve, then, I was a prodigy of learning, and at the age of twenty a prodigy of ignorance.

From 1796 to 1799, I paid attention to nothing but what might give me the means of leaving Grenoble—I mean to say, to mathematics. I anxiously calculated by what means I could devote an extra half-hour a day to my work. Moreover, I loved, and still love, mathematics for itself, since it does not admit of hypocrisy or vagueness, my two pet aversions.

In this state of mind, what did I care about a sensible, well-developed answer made by my grandfather, which included a notice of Sanchonioton⁷ and an appreciation.

⁷ Sanchonioton (or Sakkun-yathan): a more or less mythical Phœnician sage mentioned by some of the Fathers.

of the works of Court de Gebelin,⁸ of which my father, I do not know by what means, had a fine quarto edition (perhaps there are none in the duodecimo size) with a fine illustration representing the vocal organs of man?

At the age of ten I wrote in the greatest secret a comedy in prose, or rather a first act. I did not work much at it, for I was waiting for the moment of genius—I mean to say, that state of exaltation which used to seize me, at that time, perhaps twice a month. This work was a great secret; my compositions have always filled me with the same modesty as my loves. Nothing could have pained me more than to hear it talked about. I experienced the same feeling very acutely in 1830 when M. Victor de Tracy talked to me about *Le Rouge et le Noir* (novel in two volumes).

⁸ Court de Gebelin: author of a *Natural History of Speech* which appeared in 1776.



CHAPTER XI

Amar and Merlinot

One fine day two representatives of the people arrived at Grenoble, and some time afterward published a list of 152 notorious suspects (of not loving the Republic, that is to say, the government of the country) and of 350 simple suspects. The notorious ones were to be placed under arrest; as to the simple ones, they were merely to be under observation.

I saw all this from below, as a child does; perhaps by searching in the departmental journal—if one existed at that time—or in the archives, quite the opposite would be found in point of date, but as regards the effect on me and my family, what I say is certain.

However that may be, my father was a notorious suspect, and M. Henri Gagnon a simple suspect.

My family were thunderstruck by the publication of these two lists. I hasten to add that my father was not set at liberty till the 6th of Thermidor¹ (24th of July) (ah! here is a date! Set free on the 6th of Thermidor, three days before the death of Robespierre), and put on the list for twenty-two months.

This great event would date back, then, to the 26th of

¹ 6th of Thermidor: i.e., July 26th. It was on the 9th Thermidor that the Convention finally revolted against Robespierre and put him under arrest, his execution following on the next day. The Reign of Terror now came to an end, and the reaction against the Terrorists began.

April 1793. Finally, I find it recorded in my memory that my father was for twenty-two months on the list, and passed only about thirty-two or forty-two days in prison.

My Aunt Séraphie displayed great courage and activity on this occasion. She went to see the "members of the Department"—that is to say, the departmental administration—she went to see the representatives of the people, and always obtained a postponement of fifteen or twenty-two days, sometimes of fifty days.

My father ascribed the appearance of his name on the fatal list to an old rivalry between him and Amar, who was also an advocate, it seems to me.

Two or three months after this vexation, about which the family talked incessantly in the evenings, I came out with a naïve remark which confirmed my abominable reputation. They were expressing in polite terms all the horror with which they were filled at the name of Amar.

"But," I said to my father, "Amar has put you on the list as notoriously suspect of not loving the Republic; it seems to me that it is certain you do not love it."

At this remark the whole family turned red with anger. They were on the point of banishing me to confinement in my room; and during supper, which was soon announced, nobody spoke a word to me. I pondered deeply. "Nothing can be truer than what I said; my father glories in execrating 'the new order of things' [a term then fashionable among the aristocrats]; what right have they to get angry?"

This mode of reasoning: "What right has he?" was habitual with me since the first arbitrary acts which followed my mother's death, embittering my character and making me what I am.

The reader will doubtless observe that this reasoning used to raise me rapidly to the height of indignation.

My father, Chérubin Beyle, came and installed himself in the room O, known as my uncle's room. (My

charming uncle, Romain Gagnon, had got married and settled at Les Echelles, in Savoy, and when he came to Grenoble every two or three months, with the object of seeing his old loves again, he occupied this room, magnificently decorated with red damask—the magnificence of Grenoble about 1793.)

Here again can be observed the moderation of the Dauphiné mind. My father called it hiding to cross the street and go and sleep at his father-in-law's house, where it was known that he had dined and supped for two or three years past. So the Terror was very mild, and, I will boldly add, very reasonable at Grenoble. In spite of twenty-two years of progress, the Terror of 1815, or the reaction of my father's party, seems to me to have been more cruel. But the utter disgust with which 1815 inspired me, has made me forget the facts, and perhaps an impartial historian would be of a different opinion. I beg the reader, if I ever have any, to remember that I make no pretension to veracity except in what concerns my sentiments; with regard to facts I have always had a bad memory. Which meant, in parenthesis, that the famous Georges Cuvier² always beat me in the discussions which he was sometimes good enough to have with me in his drawing-room on Saturdays from 1827 to 1830.

My father, to save himself from this horrible persecution, came and installed himself in my uncle's room. It was winter, for he said to me: "This is an ice-house."

I slept beside his bed in a pretty bed made like a bird cage, out of which it was impossible to tumble. But this did not last long. I soon found myself back in the trapezium beside my grandfather's room.

It seems to me now that it was not till the Amar and Merlinot period that I came and occupied the trapezium. I was much annoyed by the smell of cooking from the kitchen of M. Reyboz, or Reybaud, the grocer, a man

² Cuvier: the famous French naturalist.

from Provence, whose accent made me laugh. I often heard him grumbling at his daughter, who was horribly ugly, otherwise I should not have failed to make her the lady of my dreams. This was a mania of mine, and it lasted a long time; but a perfect discretion was habitual to me, and I have found it, as a characteristic of the melancholy temperament, in Cabanis.

I was greatly surprised, on seeing my father at close quarters in my uncle's room, to find that he was no longer reading Bourdaloue, Massillon, or Sacy's Jansenist Bible in twenty-two volumes. The death of Louis XVI had sent him, like many others, to Hume's *History of Charles I*; as he did not know English, he read the translation by a M. Belot, or President Belot, which was the only one at that time. Soon my father, who was very changeable and absolute in his tastes, was entirely absorbed in politics. In my childhood I saw only the absurdity of the change; now I see the reason of it. Perhaps the way in which my father surrendered to his passions (or his tastes) to the exclusion of every other idea raised him a little above the level of the vulgar.

So there he was, all Hume and Smollett, and wanting to make me like these books, just as, two years before, he had wanted to make me adore Bourdaloue. You can imagine how I welcomed this proposition of my enemy Séraphie's intimate friend.

The hatred of this sour, sanctimonious creature was redoubled when she saw me established in the rôle of my father's favorite. We went through some horrible scenes together, for I stood up to her well; I would argue, and that is what drove her to fury.

My cousins Mmes Romagnier and Colomb, to whom I was tenderly attached, women aged at that time about thirty-six or forty, and the latter of them mother of M. Romain Colomb, my best friend (who in his letter of December 1835, which I received yesterday, falls foul of

me about the Preface to De Brosses;³ but never mind), used to come and play cards with my Aunt Elisabeth. These ladies were astonished at the scenes which I had with Séraphie, which sometimes went so far as to interrupt the game of boston, and I thought I could clearly distinguish that they thought I was in the right in my quarrel with this madwoman.

Thinking over these scenes seriously since the time of their occurrence (in 1793, I think), I should explain them as follows: Séraphie, who was quite pretty, used to make love to my father, and hated me passionately as the person forming a moral or legal obstacle to their marriage. It remains to find out whether, in 1793, the ecclesiastical authorities would have permitted the marriage of a brother-in-law and sister-in-law. I think they would have done so; Séraphie was of the inner congregation of the righteous in the town, together with a Mme Vignon, who was her intimate friend.

During these violent scenes, which were repeated once or twice a week, my grandfather said nothing; I have already noted that he had a character like Fontenelle; but, deep down, I guessed that he was on my side. In all reason, what could there be in common between a young woman of twenty-six or thirty and a child of ten or twelve years old?

The servants—namely, Marion, Lambert, and afterward the man who took his place—were on my side.

My sister Pauline, a pretty girl who was three or four years older than I, was on my side. My second sister, Zénaïde (now Mme Alexandre Mallein), was on Séraphie's side, and was accused by Pauline and me of spying on us for her.

³ De Brosses: usually called the "President De Brosses" (1709-1777); author of many works on the antiquities of Italy, on history and folklore, and of some interesting letters written from Italy. These were published by Stendhal's cousin, Romain Colomb, in 1836. Stendhal's essay was published in 1836 in the *Revue de Paris*.

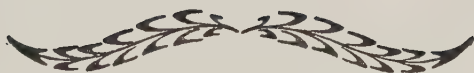
I made a caricature drawn in lead-pencil on the plaster of the great passage leading from the dining-room to the bedrooms in my grandfather's old house in the Place Grenette. Zénaïde was represented by an alleged portrait two feet high, under which I wrote, "Caroline-Zénaïde B——, telltale." This trivial affair was the cause of an abominable scene, of which I can still see the details. Séraphie was furious, and the card-party was broken up. It seems to me that Séraphie turned upon Mmes Romagnier and Colomb. These ladies, justly offended at the outbursts of this madwoman, and seeing that neither her father (M. Henri Gagnon) nor her aunt (my Great-aunt Elisabeth) could, or dared, reduce her to silence, took the step of leaving. Their departure was the signal for a redoubling of the storm. Some severe speech was made by my grandfather or my aunt; in order to keep off Séraphie, who was rushing at me, I seized a cane chair, and, holding it between us, I made off to the kitchen, where I was quite sure that the good Marion, who adored me and detested Séraphie, would protect me.

Side by side with pictures of the utmost distinctness, I find gaps in my memory; it is like some fresco from which large patches have peeled away. I see Séraphie retiring from the kitchen and myself following up the enemy along the passage. The scene had taken place in my Aunt Elisabeth's room.

I can see myself, and I can see Séraphie at the point S. As I was very fond of the kitchen, which was occupied by my friends Lambert and Marion and my father's maidservant, who had the great advantage of not being my superiors, it was there alone that I found the equality and liberty that were sweet to me. I took advantage of this scene not to appear till suppertime. It seems to me that I was crying with rage at the abominable insults ("impious wretch, criminal," etc.) which Séraphie had hurled at me; but I was bitterly ashamed of my tears.

I have been examining myself for an hour, so as to know whether this scene is actually true and real, and twenty others with it, which I have called up from the shades, and see appearing faintly after years of oblivion. Yes, indeed, that one is quite real, though I have never observed anything like it in any other family. It is true that I have seen very few middle-class homes; my disgust kept me away from them, and the fear which I caused by my rank or intelligence (I beg pardon for this vanity) perhaps prevented such scenes from taking place in my presence. At any rate, I have no doubt of the reality of that of Zénaïde and the caricature and of several others. The chief triumphs were when my father was at Claix. That meant one enemy the fewer, and that the only one who was really powerful. "Unworthy child, I could eat you," said my father one day, coming furiously toward me, but he never struck me, or two or three times at most. These words "unworthy child, etc." were addressed to me one day when I had beaten Pauline, who was making the house echo with her weeping.

In the eyes of my father, I had an abominable character. This was a truth established by Séraphie and founded on "facts": the assassination of Mme Chenavaz, my biting the forehead of Mme Pison-Dugalland, my remark about Amar. Soon came the famous anonymous letter signed Gardon. But certain explanations are necessary in order to understand this great crime. It really was a spiteful trick, and I was ashamed of it for some years when I used still to think of my childhood, before my passion for Mélanie, a passion which came to an end in 1805, when I was twenty-two years old. Today, now that the act of writing my life is making great fragments of it appear to me, I am highly pleased with the Gardon incident.



CHAPTER XII

The Gardon Letter

Battalions of Hope or an Army of Hope had been formed (it is a singular thing that I do not even recall with any certainty the name of a thing which caused such a disturbance in my childhood). I was burning to belong to these battalions, which I saw marching past. I can see today that it was an excellent institution, the only one that can root out jesuitry in France. Instead of playing round the church, the imagination of the children is occupied with war and accustomed to danger. Moreover, when their country calls upon them at the age of twenty, they know their drill, and instead of trembling before the unknown, they recall the sports of their childhood.

The Terror could so little be called a Terror at Grenoble that the aristocrats did not send their children to the battalions.

A certain Abbé Gardon, who had abandoned the monastic life, was at the head of the Army of Hope. I committed a forgery; I took a sheet of paper broader than it was long, shaped like a bill of exchange (I can see it still), and in a disguised hand I invited Citizen Gagnon to send his grandson Henri Beyle to Saint-André, to be enrolled in the Battalion of Hope. It ended up: "Fraternal salutations,

"GARDON."

The very idea of going to Saint-André was supreme happiness in my eyes. My relations gave but small proofs of intelligence; they let themselves be taken in by this letter of a child, which must have contained a hundred errors contrary to all probability. They required the advice of a little hunchback named Tourte, a regular toad-eater, who had wormed his way into the house by this infamous calling. But will this be comprehensible in 1880?

M. Tourte, who was horribly hump-backed and a copying clerk at the offices of the departmental administration, had wormed his way into the house as a hanger-on, by never taking offense, and always flattering everybody. I had deposited my paper in the space between two doors which formed a vestibule on the spiral staircase, at the point A.

My parents, in great alarm, took counsel with little Tourte, who, it seems, in his capacity of official scribe knew M. Gardon's signature. He asked for a specimen of my writing, compared the two with the sagacity of a correspondence clerk, and my poor little artifice for escaping from my cage was discovered. While they were deliberating upon my fate, I had been banished to the little room containing my grandfather's natural-history collections, which formed the entry from our splendid terrace. There I amused myself making a ball of red clay, which I had just made, "jump into the air" (a provincial expression). I was in the moral position of a young deserter who is going to be shot. The fact of having committed a forgery made me a little uneasy.

In this vestibule opening on the terrace, there was hanging on the wall a splendid map of Dauphiné, four feet across. My ball of clay in its fall from the ceiling, which was very lofty, touched the precious map, which my grandfather admired very much, and as it was very wet, it made a long red streak.

"Ah! this time I am done for!" I thought. "This is quite another matter; I am offending my only pro-

pector." At the same time, I was grieved at having done anything to displease my grandfather.

At this moment I was summoned to appear before my judges, headed by Séraphie, with the hideous hunchback Tourte by her side. I had intended to answer in Roman fashion—I mean to say, that I desired to serve my country, that it was my duty as well as my pleasure, etc. . . . But the consciousness of my offense against my excellent grandfather (the spot on the map), and the fact that I saw he was pale with the fear caused him by the letter signed Gardon, touched me, and I believe I was pitiful. It had always been a fault of mine to let myself be softened, like an idiot, by the least word of submission from the persons with whom I am the most furious, *et tentatum contemni*. In vain, in later days, did I inscribe this reflection of Livy everywhere. I have never been able to count upon remaining in a rage.

Unfortunately my weakness of heart (not of character) lost me my proud position. My plan was to threaten that I would go in person and declare to the Abbé Gardon my resolution to serve my country. I made this declaration, but in a weak, timid voice. My idea frightened them, and they saw that I had no energy. Even my grandfather condemned me, and the sentence was that for three days I should not dine at table. I had hardly been condemned, when my tender-heartedness evaporated and I again became a hero.

"I would far rather dine alone," said I, "than with tyrants who never stop scolding me."

Little Tourte wanted to play his part:

"But, Monsieur Henri, it seems to me—"

"You ought to be ashamed and hold your tongue," I broke in. "Are you a relation of mine, to talk like this?"

"But, Monsieur," he said, turning very red behind the spectacles with which his nose was armed, "as a friend of the family—"

"I will never allow myself to be scolded by a man like you."

This allusion to his enormous hump quenched his eloquence.

When I had left my grandfather's room, where the scene had taken place, and gone to do my Latin all alone in the big drawing-room, I was in the depths of depression. I felt in a confused way that I was a feeble creature; the more I thought of it, the more annoyed I was with myself.

That the son of a notorious suspect, constantly keeping out of prison by means of successive postponements, should go and ask the Abbé Gardon if he might serve his country: what answer could my relations make, with their Mass attended by eighty people every Sunday?

And so, the very next day, they began to make overtures to me. But this affair, with which Séraphie did not fail to reproach me in the very next scene which she made, raised, as it were, a wall between my relations and me. I say it with sorrow, but I began to be less fond of my grandfather, and I at once perceived clearly his chief fault. "He is afraid of his daughter; he is afraid of Séraphie!" My Aunt Elisabeth alone had remained faithful to me. And so my affection for her was redoubled.

I remember that she strove against my hatred for my father, and scolded me roundly because once, in speaking of him, I called him "that man."

Upon which I will make two remarks:

1. This hatred of my father for me, and of mine for my father, was so much taken for granted in my mind that my memory has not condescended to preserve any recollection of the part which he must have played in the terrible affair of the Gardon letter.

2. My Aunt Elisabeth had the soul of a Spaniard. Her character was the quintessence of honor. She infected me thoroughly with this way of feeling, and hence arose a ridiculous series of follies due to my delicacy and height of soul. This silliness ceased a little only in 1810, at Paris, when I was in love with Mme Petit. But even

nowadays the excellent Fiore (condemned to death at Naples in 1800) says to me:

"You spread your nets too high" (Thucydides).

My Aunt Elisabeth had still the fashion of saying, when she admired anything extremely: "That is as fine as *The Cid*."¹ She felt and experienced, but never expressed, considerable contempt for the "Fontenellism" of her brother (Henri Gagnon, my grandfather). She adored my mother, but she did not show signs of feeling when she spoke of her, as my grandfather did. I do not think I have ever seen my Aunt Elisabeth cry. She would have forgiven me anything in the world but calling my father "that man."

"But how can you expect me to love him?" I used to say to her. "Except for doing my hair when I had ringworm, what has he ever done for me?"

"He is kind enough to take you for walks."

"I would far rather stay at home, and I detest the walk to Les Granges."

(It was over against the Church of Saint-Joseph, to the southeast of this church, now included in the fortifications of Grenoble, which General Haxo is laying out;² but in 1794 the neighborhood of Saint-Joseph was filled with heaps of hemp and disgusting *routoirs* [holes half full of water for retting the hemp], in which I could see slimy frogs' eggs, which filled me with horror: "horror" is the very word; I shudder to think of them.)

While talking to me about my mother one day, my aunt let slip the remark that my mother had not been in love with my father. This information was of vast importance for me. At the bottom of my heart, I was still jealous of my father.

¹ The success of Corneille's tragedy *Le Cid* (1636), the subject of which was drawn from a Spanish play, was so great that it became a fashionable phrase to call everything "as fine as *The Cid*."

² It was between 1832 and 1836 that General Haxo was engaged in extending and transforming the defenses of Grenoble.

I went and repeated this remark to Marion, who filled me with contentment by telling me that at the time of my mother's marriage, about 1780, she had one day said to my father, who was paying attentions to her: "Go away, you horrid, ugly man."

I did not then see the vulgarity and improbability of such a remark; I saw only the sense of it, which delighted me. Tyrants are often clumsy; perhaps that is what has made me laugh most often in my life.

We had a cousin, Senterre, who was excessively gallant and gay, and, as such, was hated by my grandfather, who was much more prudent, and perhaps not altogether free from envy of poor Senterre, who was now getting on in years, and rather poor. My grandfather pretended merely to despise him on account of his past immorality. Poor Senterre was very tall, pitted with smallpox, with weak eyes and red eyelids; he wore spectacles and a broad-brimmed slouch hat.

Every other day, as it seems to me—at any rate, when the mail arrived from Paris—he would bring my grandfather five or six newspapers addressed to other persons, which we read before them.

M. Senterre used to come in the morning, about eleven o'clock, and he was given for lunch half a glass of wine and some bread; my grandfather's hatred several times went so far as to recall in my presence the fable of the Grasshopper and the Ant, meaning to suggest that poor Senterre came to the house for the sake of the drop of wine and the crust of bread.

The baseness of this reproach revolted my Aunt Elisabeth, and myself perhaps even more. But an essential trait of the silliness of tyrants is that my grandfather would put on his spectacles and read all the newspapers aloud to the family. I did not lose a syllable of them.

And in my heart I made comments on them absolutely opposed to those which I heard them make.

Séraphie was fanatically religious. My father, who was often absent from these readings, was excessively aristo-

cratic, and my grandfather an aristocrat, but much more moderate; he hated the Jacobins more especially as being badly dressed and ill-bred persons.

"What a name: Pichegru!" he used to say. That was his great objection to the famous traitor who was then conquering Holland.³ The only thing that horrified my Aunt Elisabeth were death sentences such as his.

The titles of these newspapers, which I drank in, were: *Le Journal des Hommes Libres*, *Perlet*, the title of which I can still see, with its last word formed by a printed imitation of the signature of this man Perlet; the *Journal des Débats*, the *Journal des Défenseurs de la Patrie*. Later on, as it seems to me, this paper, which left Paris by a special messenger, used to overtake the mail, which had started twenty-four hours before it.

I base my idea that M. Senterre did not come every day on the number of newspapers which there were to read. But perhaps it was not several numbers of the same paper, but a great number of different papers.

Sometimes, when my grandfather had a cold, I was given the task of reader. What a blunder on the part of my tyrants! It is like the Popes who founded a library instead of burning all books, like Omar (whose responsibility for this fine action is disputed).

During all these readings, which were still going on, as it seems to me, a year after the death of Robespierre, and took a good two hours every morning, I do not once remember being of the same opinion as that which

³Pichegru: the famous Revolutionary general who, after a series of brilliant campaigns during the early stages of the Revolutionary Wars—conspicuous among which was his conquest of Holland in 1794-5—suddenly betrayed his fellow general's plans to the enemy and began to work in favor of the royalist cause. He was arrested in 1797, but escaped abroad and fought on the side of the Allies. In 1803 he took part in the unsuccessful conspiracy against Napoleon in which Georges Cadoudal and other royalists were involved; he was allowed to come to Paris, and there was arrested. He was found murdered in prison in April 1804.

I heard my relatives express. Out of prudence I was careful not to speak; and if I sometimes tried to speak, instead of disproving what I said, they told me to be quiet. I see now that these readings were a remedy against the horrible boredom into which my family had plunged themselves three years before, on the death of my mother, when they completely broke with society.

Little Tourte made my grandfather the confidant of his love-affair with one of our relatives, whom we despised for her poverty, which was a stain on our nobility. He was sallow, hideous, and sickly-looking. He began to teach my sister Pauline to write, and it seems to me that the creature fell in love with her. He brought to the house the Abbé Tourte, his brother, whose face was disfigured by a scrofulous eruption. My grandfather said that it made him feel sick when he asked him to dinner, and I consequently shared this feeling to excess.

M. Durand continued to come to the house once or twice a day, but it seems to me that it was twice, and for this reason: I had arrived at that period of incredible silliness when a schoolboy is forced to make Latin verses (with the desire of testing whether he has poetic genius); and from this period dates my horror of verse. Even in Racine, who seems to me very eloquent, I find many tags used merely to fill up.

In order to develop my poetic genius, M. Durand brought a thick duodecimo volume, the black binding of which was horribly greasy and dirty.

Dirtiness would have given me a horror of M. de Tressan's Ariosto, which I adored; how much more, then, of the black volume belonging to M. Durand, who was rather badly dressed himself! This volume contained a poem by a Jesuit, on a fly which drowns itself in a bowl of milk.

The wit of it was wholly based upon the antithesis produced by the whiteness of the milk and the blackness

of the fly's body, the sweetness which it sought in the milk, and the bitterness of death.

These verses were dictated to me with the epithets omitted, for instance:

Musca (epithet) *duxerit annos* (epithet) *multos* (synonym).

I opened the *Gradus ad Parnassum*; I read all the epithets of the fly: *volucris*, *avis*, *nigra*, and I chose, to fill up the measure of my hexameters and pentameters, *nigra*, for instance, for *musca*, *felices* for *annos*.

The dirtiness of the book and the lack of interest in the ideas gave me such a distaste for them that every day regularly, about two o'clock, it was my grandfather who did my verses under color of helping me.

M. Durand used to come back at seven o'clock in the evening and point out to my notice and admiration the difference there was between my verses and those of the Jesuit father.

Emulation is absolutely necessary to make one swallow such ineptitude. My grandfather used to describe to me his exploits at college, and I sighed for college; there at least I could have exchanged some remarks with children of my own age.

I was soon to have this joy: a central school was founded; my grandfather was on the organizing jury and he appointed M. Durand as a master.



CHAPTER XIII

First Journey to Les Echelles

I must say something about my uncle, that charming man who brought joy into the family when he used to come to Grenoble from Les Echelles (Savoy), where he lived with his wife.

In writing my life in 1835, I make many discoveries. These discoveries are of two kinds; firstly, they are great pieces of a fresco, long since forgotten, suddenly appearing on a wall, and side by side with these well-preserved portions there are, as I have said several times, great spaces in which one sees nothing but the bricks of the wall. The groundwork, the plaster upon which the fresco was painted, has fallen away, and the fresco is forever lost. By those portions of the fresco which still subsist there is no date; I have to hunt for the dates now, in 1835. Luckily an anachronism, a confusion of one or two years, is of little importance. From the moment of my arrival in Paris, in 1799, my life is mixed up with the events in the gazette and so all the dates are certain.

Secondly, in 1835 I discern the general aspect and the explanation of the events. My uncle (Romain Gagnon) probably came to Grenoble, about 1795 or '96, only to see his former mistresses and to enjoy a change from Les Echelles, where he reigned like a prince; for Les Echelles is a country town composed, at that time, of peasants enriched by smuggling and agriculture,

where hunting was the sole pleasure. The elegances of life and the pretty women, gay, frivolous, and well-dressed, my uncle could find only at Grenoble.

I went on a visit to Les Echelles. It was like going to heaven; everything was enchanting to me. The sound of the Guiers, a torrent which went by beneath my uncle's window only two hundred feet away, became sacred to me, and transported me to heaven on the spot.

Here words already fail me; I shall have to work over and transcribe these pieces, and the same will happen later during my stay at Milan; where can I find words to paint a picture of perfect happiness, enjoyed with ecstasy and without satiety, by a spirit sensitive to the point of annihilation and madness?

I am not sure that I shall not renounce this task. The only way, it seems to me, in which I could paint a picture of this enchanting pleasure, pure, fresh, and divine, would be by the enumeration of the unhappinesses and boredom by whose complete absence it was produced. But this is surely a dismal way to paint a picture of happiness.

A seven hours' drive in a light cabriolet through Voreppe, La Placette, and Saint-Laurent-du-Pont brought me to the Guiers, which then separated France and Savoy. So at that time Savoy had not yet been conquered by General Montesquiou, whose plume I can still see; it was occupied about 1792, I think. My divine visit to Les Echelles must have been then, in 1790 or '91. I was seven or eight years old.

It was happiness, sudden, complete, and perfect, brought about and maintained by a change of scenery. An interesting journey of seven hours made Séraphie, my father, the primer, the Latin master, the dismal house of the Gagnons at Grenoble, the even more dismal house of the rue des Vieux-Jésuites, disappear forever.

Séraphie, dear Father, all that was so terrible and so powerful at Grenoble, did not exist at Les Echelles. My aunt, Camille Poncet, married to my uncle Gagnon, a

tall, fine woman, was kindness and gaiety personified. A year or two before this journey, near the bridge at Claix, on the side near to Claix at the point A, I had had a momentary glimpse of her white skin a little way above her knees, as she was descending from our covered wagon. When I thought of her, she was the object of my most ardent desire. She is still alive; I have not seen her for thirty or thirty-three years; she has always been perfectly kind. When she was young, she had real sensibility. She greatly resembled the charming women of Chambéry (where she often went; it was five leagues from her house), so well described by J. J. Rousseau (*Confessions*); she had a sister of the most delicate beauty, with the clearest possible complexion, to whom it seems to me that my uncle made love a little. I would not swear that he did not also honor with his attentions Fanchon, the maid and general factotum, the best-natured and gayest of girls, though not at all pretty.

During this visit there were nothing but exquisite and poignant sensations of happiness, and I could write twenty pages of superlatives about it.

This difficulty, the profound regret at describing it badly and thus spoiling a heavenly memory in which the subject is too far beyond the writer, gives me real pain instead of pleasure in writing. Later on I shall very possibly not describe at all the passage of the Saint-Bernard with the army of reserves (16th to 18th May 1800), and my stay at Milan in the Casa Castelbarco, or the Casa Bovara.

However, so as not to leave my visit to Les Echelles a blank, I will make a note of a few memories which must give the most inaccurate idea of the things which occasioned them. I was eight years old when I had this vision of heaven.

An idea comes to me. Perhaps all the unhappiness of my horrible life at Grenoble, from 1790 to 1799, was a piece of good fortune, since it led up to the happiness, which nothing in my eyes can surpass, of my visit to Les

Echelles, and of my stay at Milan at the time of Marengo. When I arrived at Les Echelles, everybody was a friend; everybody smiled at me as if I were a child full of intelligence. My grandfather, a man of the world, had said to me: "You are ugly, but nobody will ever find fault with you for your ugliness."

I learn, ten years or so ago, that one of the women who loved me the best, or at any rate the longest, Victorine Bigillion, spoke of me in the same terms after twenty-five years of absence.

At Les Echelles I made an intimate friend of *La Fanchon*, as they called her. I was abashed by the beauty of my "Auntie" Camille, and hardly dared to speak to her, but my eyes devoured her. I was taken to see the MM. Bonne, or de Bonne, for they had great pretensions to nobility; I am not even sure that they did not give themselves out to be related to the Lesdiguières.

A few years later I found the portrait of these good people, line for line, in the *Confessions* of Rousseau, in the part about Chambéry.

The elder M. Bonne, who farmed his demesne of Berlandet, ten minutes from Les Echelles—where he gave a delightful party with cakes and milk, at which I was put on a donkey led by young Grubillon—was the best of men; his brother, M. Blaise, the notary, was the more foolish of the two. We made fun of M. Blaise all day, and he laughed with the others. Their brother, Bonne-Savardin, a merchant at Marseilles, was very finely dressed; but the courtier of the family, the Lovelace whom they all regarded with respect, was in the service of the King at Turin, and I only caught a glimpse of him.

I recall him only by a portrait which Mme Camille Gagnon has now in her bedroom at Grenoble (my late grandfather's room; the portrait, decked with a red cross, of which the whole family is proud, is hung between the fireplace and the little anteroom).

There was at Les Echelles a tall, beautiful girl, a

refugee from Lyons (so the Terror has started at Lyons; that might give me an exact date. This delightful journey took place before the conquest of Savoy by General Montesquiou,¹ as he was then called, and after the royalists escaped from Lyons).

Mlle Cochet was in charge of her mother, but was accompanied by her lover, a handsome young man, M——, who was dark and sad-looking. It seems to me that they had only just arrived from Lyons. Mlle Cochet afterward married one of my cousins, a handsome idiot (M. Doyat of La Terrasse), and had a son at the *École polytechnique*. It seems to me that she was for a little while my father's mistress. She was tall, kind, quite pretty, and when I knew her at Les Echelles, very gay. She was charming at the party at Berlandet. But Mlle Poncet, Camille's sister (now Mme Blanchet, and a widow), had a more delicate beauty; she talked very little.

The mother of my Aunt Camille and of Mlle —, Mme Poncet, sister of the Bonnes and of Mme Giraud, and my uncle's mother-in-law, was an excellent woman. Her house, where I slept, was a perfect headquarters of gaiety.

This delightful house had a wooden gallery, and a garden on the same side as the torrent, the Guiers. The garden was crossed diagonally by the embankment of the Guiers.

At a second party at Berlandet, I made a scene out of jealousy; a young lady whom I loved had shown favor to a rival of twenty or twenty-five. But who was the object of my love? Perhaps this will come back to me as many things come back to me while I write. Here is the place where the scene took place; I see it as clearly as if I had left it a week ago, but not its general aspect.

After my scene of jealousy, I threw stones at the ladies from the point A. Corbeau, a tall officer on furlough,

¹ Conquest of Savoy: in 1792.

picked me up and put me on an apple tree or mulberry tree at M, at the point O, between two branches, from which I dared not get down. I jumped and hurt myself, and ran away toward Z.

I had slightly sprained my ankle, and I ran off limping; the excellent Corbeau ran after me, picked me up, and carried me on his shoulders as far as Les Echelles.

He was rather given to being a ladies' man and told me that he had been in love with Mlle Camille Poncet, my aunt; but she had preferred the brilliant Romain Gagnon, a young lawyer of Grenoble who had returned after his emigration of Turin.

On this visit I had a glimpse of Mlle Thérésine Maistre, the sister of the Comte de Maistre,² nicknamed Bance, and it was Bance, the author of the *Voyage autour de ma Chambre*, whose success I witnessed at Rome about 1832. He is now nothing but a very polite Ultra, managed by his Russian wife, and still interested in painting. His genius and gaiety have disappeared; nothing is left but his goodness.

What shall I say of our excursion to the Grotto? I can still hear the still drops falling from the top of the great rocks onto the road. We took a few steps into the Grotto with the ladies. Mlle Poncet was frightened, Mlle Cochet had more courage. On the way back, we passed over the bridge of "Jean-Lioud" (Heaven knows what its real name is).

What shall I say of the hunt in the woods of Berland, on the left bank of the Guiers, near the bridge of Jean-Lioud? I often slipped under the great beeches. M——, Mlle Cochet's lover, shot with —— (their names and appearance have escaped my memory). My uncle gave

² Comte Xavier de Maistre, born at Chambéry, brother of the famous diplomatist Joseph de Maistre, whose works, especially *Du Pape*, had a vast influence on the reaction both in Church and State. When the French Revolutionary Armies annexed Savoy, Xavier de Maistre went and took service in the Russian army. His brother was afterward ambassador for Sardinia at Saint Petersburg.

my father a huge dog called Berland, of a dingy black. After a year or two this souvenir of my country of delight fell sick and died; I can see it still.

In the woods of Berland I laid in imagination the scenes of Ariosto. The forest of Berland, and the cliff-like precipices which border it on the side where runs the road to Saint-Laurent-du-Pont, became to me a type of all that was dear and sacred. It is there that I laid the scenes of all the enchantments of Ismena in the *Jerusalem Delivered*. On my return to Grenoble, my grandfather let me read the translation of the *Jerusalem* by Mirabaud, in spite of all the remonstrances and complaints of Séraphie.

My father, the most elegant, the most subtle, the most polite of men—in a word, the typical man of Dauphiné—could not fail to be jealous of the amiability, the gaiety, the physical and moral elegance of my uncle.

He accused him of “embroidering” (lying). Wishing to be amiable, like my uncle, on this visit to Les Echelles, I wanted to “embroider” in imitation of him.

I invented some story or other about my primer (a volume which I hid under my bed so that my Latin master [was it M. Joubert or M. Durand?] should not mark, with his nail, the lessons I was to learn at Les Echelles).

My uncle easily found out this lie of a child of eight or nine years old; I had not the presence of mind to say to him: “I was trying to be amiable, like you!” As I was fond of him, I took it to heart, and the lesson made a deep impression on me.

By scolding and reproving me with as much reason and justice as this, they could have done anything with me. I shudder to think of it: if Séraphie had had her brother’s politeness and intelligence, she would have made a Jesuit of me.

Today I am simply steeped in contempt. How much baseness and cowardice there is in the generals of the Empire! There lies the great defect in Napoleon’s type

of genius: to raise a man to the highest dignities because he is brave and has talent for leading an attack. What abysses of moral baseness and cowardice in those peers who have just condemned the noncommissioned officer Samto³ to imprisonment for life, beneath the sun of Pondicherry, for a fault hardly deserving six months' prison! And six poor young fellows have already done twenty months (December 18, 1835)!

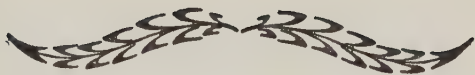
As soon as I get my *History of the Revolution*, by M. Thiers, I must write in the blank pages of the volume on 1793 the names of all those generals who, as peers, have just condemned M. Thomas, so that I can despise them sufficiently all the time I am reading about the fine actions which made their fame about 1793. Most of these infamous creatures are now sixty-five or seventy. My groveling friend Félix Faure has their infamous baseness without their fine actions. And M. d'Houdetot! And Dijon! I will say, like Julien: "Blackguards! blackguards! blackguards!"

Excuse this long parenthesis, reader of 1880! All that I am writing about will be forgotten by that time. The generous indignation with which my heart is throbbing prevents me from writing any more without being ridiculous. If there is a passable government in 1880, the cascades, the rapids, the anxieties through which France has passed in order to arrive at it will be forgotten; history will have only one remark to add to the name of Louis Philippe: "the most rascally of kings."

M. de Corbeau, who had become my friend since he had carried me on his back from Berlandet to Les Echelles, took me trout-fishing, with a rod, in the Guiers.

³ "Samto": an example of Stendhal's habit of replacing proper names in his manuscripts by anagrams, a habit due to his morbid fear of the Austrian police. "Samto" here is obviously the M. Thomas mentioned below. Clément Thomas was quartermaster in a cuirassier regiment stationed at Lunéville, and tried unsuccessfully to provoke a mutiny in the regiments stationed in the Vosges at the time of the April conspiracy.

He fished between the gates of Chailles, at the foot of the precipices in the gorge of Chailles, and the bridge of Les Echelles, and sometimes in the direction of the bridge of Jean-Lioud. His line was fifteen or twenty feet long. Near Chailles, as he was withdrawing his hook sharply, his white horsehair line passed over a tree, and the three-quarter-pound trout appeared hanging on the top of the leafless tree, twenty feet from the ground. What a joy for me!



CHAPTER XIV

Death of Poor Lambert

I place here, so as not to lose it, a drawing¹ with which I adorned a letter that I wrote this morning to my friend R. Colomb. At his age, like a prudent man, he has been bitten with the rage for versifying, which has induced him to reproach me for writing a preface to the new edition of De Broses; now he too had written a preface. This card is intended as an answer to Colomb, who says that I shall despise him.

I add that if there is another world, I shall go and pay my respects to Montesquieu, and he will say, perhaps: "My poor friend, you had no talent at all in the other world." I shall be annoyed, but not surprised; the eye cannot see itself.

But my letter to Colomb will only glance off all moneyed people; when they have arrived at comfort, they began to hate those who have been read by the public. The clerks at the Ministry for Foreign Affairs would be very glad to give me some little vexation in my official work. This disease is even more malignant when the moneyed man, on arriving at the age of fifty, is seized with the mania of becoming a writer. It is like the generals of the Empire, who, when they saw, about 1820, that the Restoration had no use for them, took to

¹ The drawing here alluded to is that of the "way of fortune" reproduced on p. 240.

loving music passionately, I mean to say, as a last resource.

Let us come back to 1794 or '95. I protest once more that I do not pretend to paint a picture of things in themselves, but only of their effect upon me. How can I fail to be convinced of this truth by a simple observation? I do not remember the faces of my relatives—for instance, of my excellent grandfather, whom I have so often looked at with all the affection of which an ambitious child is capable.

Since, in accordance with the barbarous system adopted by my father and Séraphie, I had not a single friend or companion of my own age, my sociability (or inclination to talk freely about everything) had split into two branches.

My grandfather was my serious and respectable companion.

The friend to whom I told everything was a very intelligent young man named Lambert, who was manservant to my grandfather. My confidences often bored Lambert, and when I pressed him too closely he would give me a sharp little rap on the head, as befitted my age. I was all the fonder of him for it. His chief occupation, which he disliked very much, was to go and fetch peaches from Saint-Vincent (near Le Fontanil), my grandfather's demesne.

By this cottage, which I adored, there were some espaliers, with a very good aspect, which produced splendid peaches. There were some vines which produced excellent grapes known as *lardan* (a species of *chasselas*; those of Fontainebleau are only an imitation). All these fruits arrived at Grenoble in two baskets placed at the end of a flat stick, and this stick was balanced on the shoulder of Lambert, who had to walk like this the four miles which separated Saint-Vincent from Grenoble.

Lambert had ambitions, and was discontented with his lot; in order to improve it, he went in for breeding

silkworms, in imitation of my Aunt Séraphie, who ruined her chest raising silkworms at Saint-Vincent. (During this period I was able to breathe. The house at Grenoble, managed by my grandfather and the wise Elisabeth, became pleasant to me. I sometimes ventured to go out without Lambert's inevitable company.)

My best friend, for this is what he was, had bought a mulberry tree (near Saint-Joseph), and used to raise his silkworms in the room of some mistress of his.

While he was gathering the leaves from this mulberry tree, he fell, and was brought home to us on a ladder. My grandfather tended him like a son. But he had concussion of the brain; the light made no impression on his pupils, and he died after three days. In his delirium, which never ceased, he wailed aloud, and his cries went to my heart.

I knew sorrow for the first time in my life. I thought of death.

The heart-rending grief produced by my mother's death had been a madness into which entered, as it seems to me, a great deal of love. My sorrow at the death of Lambert was sorrow as I have experienced it during all the rest of my life, a thoughtful, sterile grief, without tears and without consolation. I was heart-broken and on the point of collapsing (which was sharply blamed by Séraphie) when, ten times a day, I entered my friend's room and looked at his handsome face; he was dying and breathing his last.

I shall never forget his beautiful black eyebrows and that appearance of health and strength which was only increased by his delirium. I saw him bled, and after each bleeding I saw them try the experiment of passing the light before his eyes (a sensation which was recalled to me on the evening of the Battle of Landshut, I believe, in 1809).

Once, in Italy, I saw a figure of Saint John watching the crucifixion of his friend and his God; and, all of a sudden, it gave me a shock of remembrance, recalling

what I had felt twenty-five years before, on the death of "poor Lambert," as he was called in the family after his death. I could fill another five or six pages with the clear-cut memories of this great sorrow which remain with me. He was nailed up in his coffin, and carried away.

Sunt lacrimæ rerum.

The same corner of my heart is moved by certain accompaniments of Mozart in *Don Juan*.

Poor Lambert's room opened onto the grand staircase, by the side of the cupboard where the liqueurs were kept.

A week after his death Séraphie flew into a quite justifiable rage because she was served with some soup, or what not, in a little bowl of chipped earthenware, which I can still see (forty years after the event), and which had been used to catch Lambert's blood once when he was bled. I suddenly burst into tears, so violently that I was choked with sobs. I had never been able to cry at my mother's death. I did not begin to be able to cry till more than a year after, alone during the night in my bed. Séraphie, on seeing me crying over Lambert, made a scene. I went off to the kitchen, repeating below my voice, as if to revenge myself: "Infamous, infamous!"

My most delightful confidences to my friend took place while he was working at sawing wood in the wood-shed, separated from the yard at C by an open partition formed of bars of turned walnut, like the balustrade of a garden.

After his death, I used to take up my position in the gallery, from the second floor of which I could see perfectly the bars of the balustrade, which seemed to me splendid for making tops. How old can I have been then? This idea about the tops points to the age of my intelligence at least. I have an idea; I could have a

search made for the entry of poor Lambert's death in the register; but was Lambert his Christian name or his surname? It seems to me that his brother, who kept a disreputable little café in the rue de Bonne, near the barracks, was also called Lambert. But good heavens! What a difference! I used to think then that nobody could be commoner than this brother, whom Lambert used to take me to see sometimes. For I must confess that, in spite of my opinions, which were entirely and fundamentally republican, my relations had completely infected me with their aristocratic and reserved tastes. I have never got over this fault; it prevented me, for instance, not ten days ago, from taking advantage of an affair with a woman which offered itself. I abhor the mob (that is, any contact with them) while at the same time, under the name of "the people," I have a passionate desire for their happiness; and I believe this can be brought about only by laying before them questions on a matter of importance—I mean to say, by calling upon them to elect their own deputies.

My friends, or rather those who pretend to be my friends, take their stand upon this fact to cast doubts upon the sincerity of my liberalism. I have a horror of what is dirty; now, the people are always dirty, in my eyes. There is only one exception, in the case of Rome, but there the dirt is hidden by ferocity. (For instance, the unparalleled dirtiness of the little Sardinian Abbé Crobras; but my respect for his energy is unlimited. His lawsuit lasting for five years against his superiors. *Ubi missa, ibi menia*.² Few men are strong enough for this. The Princes Caetani are well acquainted with these stories about M. Crobras, of Sartena, I believe, in Sardinia.)

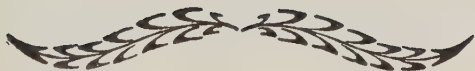
The antics which I went through at the point A are incredible. It was enough to make me break a blood

² "Where the Mass is, there is madness."

vessel. I have just hurt myself by mimicking them at least forty years after. Who remembers Lambert today, who but the heart of his friend?

I will go further; who remembers Alexandrine, who died in January 1815, twenty years ago?

Who remembers Métilde, who died in 1825? Do they not belong to me, me who love them better than everyone else in the world? Me, who think passionately of them ten times a week, and often for two hours on end?



CHAPTER XV

My mother, they used often to say in the family, had had a rare talent for drawing. "Alas, what did she not do well?" they would add with a deep sigh. After which, there was a long, sad silence. The fact is that before the Revolution, which changed all these retired provinces, drawing was taught at Grenoble as ridiculously as Latin. Drawing meant making nice, parallel cross-hatchings with red chalk, and imitating engravings; little attention was given to the outline.

I used often to find big heads in red chalk drawn by my mother.

My grandfather cited this example, this all-powerful precedent, and in spite of Séraphie I went to learn drawing from M. Le Roy. This was a great point gained; as M. Le Roy lived in the Teisseires' house, before the great doorway of the Jacobins, I was gradually allowed to go to his house and, above all, to come back alone.

This was an enormous thing for me. My tyrants, for so I called them when I saw other children running about, would allow me to go alone from P to R. I realized that by walking very fast—for they used to count the minutes, and Séraphie's window looked straight onto the Place Grenette—I could walk round the Place de la Halle, which one reached through the door L. I was only exposed to view during the part between R and L. The clock of Saint-André, from which the town took its time, used to strike the quarters; I was bound to leave M. Le Roy's at half past three or four o'clock (I do not quite remember which) and to be at home

five minutes after. Under the threat of losing a pupil who paid well, it was specially impressed upon M. Le Roy, or rather Mme Le Roy, a termagant of thirty-five, very piquante and with fine eyes, not to let me leave before a quarter past three. Sometimes, on my way up stairs, I used to stop for a quarter of an hour at a time, looking out of the staircase window, at F, for no other pleasure than that of feeling myself free; during these rare moments my imagination, instead of being taken up with calculating the moves of my tyrants, would give itself up to enjoying everything.

It soon became my great business to guess whether Séraphie would be at home at half past three, the time of my return. My good friend Marion (Marie Thomasset of Vinay), a servant out of Molière, who detested Séraphie, used to help me a great deal.

One day when Marion had told me that Séraphie was going out after her coffee, about three o'clock, to pay a visit to her great friend Mme Vignon, *la boime* [a local word meaning a sanctimonious hypocrite], I ventured to go to the public gardens (full of little street boys). To do this, I crossed the Place Grenette by passing behind the chestnut stall and the pump and slipping under the archway of the garden.

I was seen; some friend or protégé of Séraphie's betrayed me; there was a scene that evening before my grandparents. I lied, as in duty bound, on being asked by Séraphie: "Have you been in the public gardens?"

Thereupon my grandfather scolded me, gently and politely, but firmly, for lying. I felt acutely something that I did not know how to express. Is not lying the sole resource of slaves? An old manservant, poor Lambert's successor, a sort of La Rancune,¹ who faithfully executed the orders of my relatives, and used to say morosely in speaking of himself: "I am the wiper-up of chamber-

¹ *Rancune* in French means spite or grudge. *La Rancune* is presumably the name given to a surly footman in some old comedy.

pots," was told off to take me to M. Le Roy's. I was free on the days when he went to Saint-Vincent for the fruit.

This glimpse of liberty made me furious. "What can they do to me, after all?" I said to myself. "Where is the child of my age who does not go out alone?"

I went several times to the public gardens. If they noticed it, I was scolded, but I did not answer. They threatened to take me away from the drawing-master, but I continued my walks. Lured by a little liberty, I had become savage. My father was at the beginning of his great passion for agriculture, and he often went to Claix. I believed I noticed that in his absence I began to make Séraphie afraid of me. My Aunt Elisabeth, with her Spanish pride, having no legitimate authority, remained neutral; my grandfather, thanks to his Fontenelle-like character, abhorred shouting; Marion and my sister Pauline were out-and-out on my side. Séraphie was held to be mad by many people—for instance, by those excellent women, our cousins Mmes Colomb and Romagnier. (I was able to appreciate them when I had arrived at years of discretion and had some experience of life.) During those scenes a word from Mme Colomb made me retire within myself, which leads me to suppose that by gentle means they could have done anything with me, probably turning me into a dull, tortuous typical man of Dauphiné. I began to resist Séraphie, and in my turn I had abominable fits of rage.

"You shall not go to M. Le Roy's any more," she would say.

It seems to me, when I think hard, that Séraphie won a victory, and my drawing-lessons were consequently interrupted.

The Terror was so mild at Grenoble that my father, from time to time, went to live in his house in the rue des Vieux-Jésuites. There I can see M. Le Roy giving me a lesson at the great black desk in my father's study, and saying to me at the end of the lesson:

"Monsieur, tell your dear father that I cannot come

any more for thirty-five (or forty-five) francs a lesson."

It was because of the rapid fall, the "landslide," as they said in our province, in the value of the Republican paper money. But what date can I assign to this very distinct picture which came back to me all of a sudden? Perhaps it was much later, at the time when I was painting in gouache?

M. Le Roy's lessons were what mattered the least to me. This master used to make me do eyes in profile and full face, and ears in red chalk from other drawings which were engraved in the style of crayon drawings.

M. Le Roy was a Parisian, very polite, unexpansive, and in poor health, being aged by excessive libertinage (such is my impression, but how could I justify the word "excessive"?); for the rest, he was polite and civilized, as men are in Paris, which made an impression of excessive politeness on me, accustomed as I was to the cold, discontented, far from civilized air which is the habitual expression of the cunning natives of Dauphiné. (See the character of old Sorel, in the *Rouge*; but where the devil will the *Rouge* be in 1880? It will have passed the dark shores.)

One evening, at nightfall—it was cold—I had the audacity to escape, apparently on my way to join my Aunt Elisabeth at Mme Colomb's; I dared to enter the Jacobin Club, which held its meetings in the Church of Saint-André. I was full of the heroes of Roman history; I looked upon myself as a future Camillus or Cincinnatus, or a mixture of the two. "Heaven knows to what penalty I am exposing myself," I said, "if some spy of Séraphie's [such was my idea then] sees me here." The president was at P, some badly dressed women at F, myself at H.

They rose to speak, and spoke with considerable disorder. My grandfather was in the habit of mocking gaily at their turns of phrase. It seemed to me at once that my grandfather was right. My impression was rather unfavorable; I found these people, whom I should

have liked to love, horribly vulgar. This narrow, high church was very badly lighted, and I saw there many women of the lowest class. In a word, I was then what I am today; I love the people and detest oppressors, but every moment would be a torture to me if I had to live with the people.

I will borrow for an instant the language of Cabanis. I have too fine a skin, a woman's skin (later on I always had blisters after holding my saber for an hour); I graze my fingers, which are very fine, for a trifle; in a word, the surface of my body is feminine. Hence, perhaps, my unbounded horror of what looks dirty, damp, or dingy. Many of these things were to be found among the Jacobins at Saint-André.

When, an hour later, I entered Mme Colomb's house, my aunt, of the Spanish character, looked at me very gravely. We went out; when we were alone in the street, she said to me:

"If you break away like this, your father will notice it."

"Never, unless Séraphie denounces me."

"Allow me to speak. . . . And I do not care to have to discuss you with your father. I shall not take you to Mme Colomb's again."

These words, pronounced with great simplicity, touched me. The ugliness of the Jacobins had impressed me. I was pensive on the next day and the days following. My idol was shaken. If my grandfather had guessed what I was feeling—and I would have told him everything if he had spoken to me about it while we were watering the flowers on the terrace—he might have turned the Jacobins to ridicule forever and brought me back to the fold of the Aristocracy (so it was then called; nowadays the Legitimist or Conservative party). Instead of deifying the Jacobins, my imagination would have been at work recalling and exaggerating the dirtiness of their meeting-place at Saint-André's.

This dirtiness, left to itself, was soon effaced by some

story of a battle won, which made my family lament.

About this period the arts took hold upon my imagination, by way of the senses, as a preacher would say. In M. Le Roy's studio there was a big, fine landscape. Nearest to the eye was a mountain with a steep incline covered with tall trees; at the foot of this mountain, below the last line of trees, a stream, shallow but broad and limpid, ran from left to right. In it were gaily bathing three women, almost naked (or without the "almost"). This was almost the only point of light in the canvas, three and a half feet by two and a half.

This landscape, with its charming verdure, falling upon an imagination prepared by reading *Félicia*,² became for me the ideal of happiness. It was a mixture of tender sentiments and a soft sensuousness. To think of bathing like that with such charming women!

The water was of a limpidity that formed a beautiful contrast with the stinking brooks of Les Granges, full of frogs and covered with green decaying matter. I took the green plant which grows on these polluted brooks for decay. If my grandfather had said to me: "It is a plant; even the mold which spoils bread is a plant," my horror would quickly have ceased. I did not quite get over it till after M. Adrien de Jussieu, during our journey to Naples (1832) (a man so natural, so wise, so reasonable and worthy to be loved), had talked to me at length about these little plants, which were still in my eyes signs of corruption, although I knew vaguely that they were plants.

I have only one means of preventing my imagination from playing me tricks, and that is to walk straight up to things. I saw this well when I walked up to the two cannon (which is mentioned in General Michaud's certificate).

Later, I mean about 1805, at Marseilles, I had the exquisite pleasure of seeing my mistress, who had a more

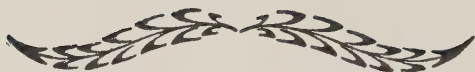
² The full name of this work was *Félicia ou Mes Fredaines*, and its influence on Stendhal is described on p. 143.

than usually well-proportioned body, bathing in the Huveaune with its crown of great trees (at Mme Roy's country-house).

I vividly recalled M. Le Roy's landscape, which for four or five years had been for me the ideal of voluptuous happiness. I might have cried aloud, like some simpleton in one of the novels of 1832: "Behold my ideal!"

All this, as you can feel, is quite independent of the merit of the landscape, which was probably like a dish of spinach, with no aerial perspective.

Later on, the *Traité nul*, an opera by Gaveau, was for me the beginning of a passion which came to a pause with the *Matrimonio Segreto*, which I came across at Ivrea (at the end of May 1800), and with *Don Juan*.



CHAPTER XVI

I was working at a little table at the point P, near the second window of the big Italian drawing-room; I was translating with pleasure Virgil, or the *Metamorphoses* of Ovid, when the deep murmur of a vast crowd, assembled on the Place Grenette, informed me that they had just guillotined two priests.

This is the only blood that flowed at Grenoble under the Terror of '93.

Here is one of my faults: my reader of 1880, far removed from the fury and earnestness of the party spirit, will take a dislike to me when I confess that this death, which froze my grandfather with horror, which made Séraphie rage, and redoubled the haughty Spanish silence of my Aunt Elisabeth, gave me pleasure. There, I have written the great word.

What is more, and what is worse, I still love, in 1835, the man of 1794.

(Here is another means of getting hold of an actual date. The register of the criminal tribunal, now the Royal Courts, in the Place Saint-André, must give the date of the death of MM. Revenas and Guillabert.)

My confessor, M. Dumolard, of Le Bourg d'Oisans (a priest with one eye, and a fairly good man in appearance; since 1815 a rabid Jesuit), showed me, with gestures which I thought ridiculous, some prayers or Latin verses written by MM. Revenas and Guillabert, whom he tried by every means to make me regard as leading lights.

I answered proudly:

"My *bon papa* (grandfather) has told me that twenty years ago they hanged two Protestant ministers in the same place."

"Ah! That is quite different!"

"The Parliament condemned these latter two for their religion, the civil criminal tribunal has just condemned the others for betraying their country."

If these were not my words, this is at any rate the sense.

But I did not yet know that it is dangerous to argue with tyrants; they must have read in my eyes how small was my sympathy for two traitors to the country. (There were not in 1795, and in my eyes there is not now in 1835, any crime that is even comparable to this.)

They had an abominable quarrel with me about this; my father flew into one of the greatest rages with me which I can remember. Séraphie was in triumph. My Aunt Elisabeth gave me a private talking-to. But I believe, God forgive me, that I convinced her it was the law of retaliation (*lex talionis*).

Fortunately for me, my grandfather did not join my enemies, and, in particular, he was entirely of opinion that the death of the two Protestant ministers was just as much to be condemned.

"It is petty; under the *tyrant* Louis XV the country was not in danger."

I did not say "tyrant," but my face must have said it.

If my grandfather, who had already been against me in the battle of the Abbé Gardon, had shown himself the same in this affair, all would have been over; I should have loved him no more. Our conversations on fine literature, Horace, M. de Voltaire, Chapter XV of *Bélisaire*,¹ the fine passages of *Télémaque*,² and *Séthos*,³ which formed my intelligence, would have come to an end and I should have been much unhappier during all

¹ A romance by Marmontel (1769).

² A moral tale by Fénelon (1699).

³ A novel by the Abbé Terrasson (d. 1750).

the time that elapsed between the death of the two unfortunate priests and my exclusive passion for mathematics (spring or summer of 1797).

All the winter afternoons were passed warming our legs in the sun, in my Aunt Elisabeth's room, which looked over the Place Grenette at the point A. Beyond the Church of Saint-Louis, or beside it, to be more exact, we saw the trapezium-shaped mountain of the Villard-de-Lans. There dwelt my imagination; led by M. de Tressan's Ariosto, it saw and dreamed of nothing but a meadow amid high mountains. My mad writing at that time had a great semblance to the annexed specimen of my famous compatriot Barnave's handwriting.

My grandfather was in the habit of saying, as he drank his excellent coffee, about two o'clock in the afternoon, sunning his legs the while: "In this climate, from the 15th of February onward, it is good to be in the sun."

He was very fond of geological theories, and would have been a partisan, or an adversary, of the upheaval theories of M. Elie de Beaumont, which are my delight. My grandfather used to talk to me with passion—that is the essential point—of the geological ideas of a M. Guettard, whom he had known, as it seems to me.

I and my sister Pauline, who was on my side, noticed that at the most beautiful moment of the day, while we were having coffee, conversation always used to consist of lamentations. They lamented over everything.

I cannot reproduce events in their reality, I can only reproduce their shadow.

We passed the summer evenings, from seven to half past nine, on the terrace (at nine o'clock the bell known as the *Sein*, or *Saint*,⁴ rang at Saint-André; the beautiful tones of this bell gave me an acute emotion). My father, who was not very sensitive to the beauty of the stars (I

⁴ "Sein, or Saint": the *sing* (from L. *signum*, sign) was the bell rung at Grenoble at nightfall to announce the closing of the town gates.

used to talk constellations incessantly with my grandfather), would say that he was catching cold, and go and talk with Séraphie in the adjoining room.

This terrace, formed by the thickness of a wall called Sarrasin,⁵ a wall fifteen or eighteen feet broad, had a magnificent view over the mountains of Sassenage. It was there that the sun set in winter; in summer it set over the rock of Voreppe, and to the northwest of the Bastille; so the mountain (now transformed by General Haxo) used to rise above all the houses and over the Tour de Rabot, which, it seems to me, used to be the old entry of the town before they had cut through the rock of the Porte de France.

My grandfather had spent a great deal on this terrace. Poncet, the carpenter, came and took possession for a year of the natural-history anteroom, for which he made the white wood cupboards. He next made some boxes eighteen feet wide and two feet high of chestnut wood, filled with good earth, vines, and flowers. Two vine stocks climbed up from the garden of M. Périer-Lagrange, our neighbor, a good-natured idiot.

My grandfather had had arches set up, made of chestnut laths. This was a big piece of work, which he entrusted to a carpenter named Poncet, a good-natured drunkard aged about thirty, and rather gay. He became my friend, for with him, at last, I found the equality which was sweet to me.

My grandfather used to water his flowers every day, twice rather than once. Séraphie never came onto this terrace, so it was a moment of respite. I always helped my grandfather water the flowers, and he would talk to me of Linnæus and Pliny, not out of duty, but with pleasure.

This was the great and extreme obligation which I am under to this excellent man. It was particularly fortunate that he used to make great fun of pedants (the Lermi-

⁵ This wall, still known as the "Saracen wall," is really part of the old Roman ramparts of Grenoble.

niers and Salvandys of today); he had a mind of the same kind as M. Letronne,⁶ who has just dethroned Memnon (nothing more nor less than the statue of Memnon). My grandfather would talk to me with the same interest about Egypt; he took me to see the mummy bought, through his influence, for the public library. It was there that the excellent Father Ducros (the first man of superior intelligence to whom I spoke in my life) was so remarkably kind to me. My grandfather, who was very much blamed by Séraphie, supported in silence by my father, made me read *Séthos* (a heavy novel by the Abbé Terrasson), which I then found divine. A novel is like a bow; the body of the violin, which gives forth the sound, is the soul of the reader. I was full of wild dreams at that time, and I will tell you why. While my grandfather was reading, seated in an armchair at D, facing the little bust of Voltaire, I used to look at his bookcase, standing at B. I used to open the quarto volume of Pliny, a translation with the text opposite it. In it I used especially to look for the natural history of *woman*.

A nice smell—it was amber or musk (which for the last sixteen years have made me quite ill; perhaps amber and musk are the same scent)—at any rate, I was attracted by a heap of paper-covered books thrown down in a disorderly heap at L. They were unbound, improper novels that my uncle had left at Grenoble when he went away to settle at Les Echelles (Savoy, near the Pont-de-Beauvoisin). This discovery had a decisive influence on my character. I opened a few of these books; they were poor novels of 1780, but for me they were the essence of sensuous pleasure.

My grandfather forbade me to touch them; but I watched for the moment when he was in his armchair, quite absorbed in reading the new books, of which, by

⁶ Letronne: a celebrated French archæologist, director of the Royal Library in 1833; author of a monograph on the famous vocal statute of Memnon.

what means I do not know, he had always an abundance, and I stole a volume of my uncle's novels. My grandfather no doubt noticed my thefts, for I can see myself settled in the natural-history anteroom, watching for some patient to come and ask for him. In these circumstances my grandfather would lament at seeing himself torn from his beloved studies, and would go and receive the patient in his room, or in the antechamber of the big apartment. Quick as thought, I slipped into the study, at L, and stole a volume.

I cannot express the passion with which I read these books. After a month or two I found *Félicia, ou Mes Fredaines*. I went absolutely mad; the possession of a real mistress, which was then the object of all my desires, would not have plunged me into such a torrent of acute pleasure.

From this moment my vocation was settled: to live in Paris and write comedies, like Molière.

This was my fixed idea, which I hid by a profound dissimulation; the tyranny of Séraphie had given me the habits of a slave.

I have never been able to speak about what I adored; to do such a thing would have seemed to me a blasphemy.

I feel this as keenly in 1835 as I did in 1794.

My uncle's books bore the address of M. Falcon, who then kept the only reading-room; he was a zealous patriot, profoundly despised by my grandfather and absolutely hated by Séraphie and my father. Consequently, I began to love him; he is perhaps the inhabitant of Grenoble for whom I have had the highest esteem. There was in this former lackey of Mme de Brizon (or some other lady in the rue Neuve, at whose house my grandfather had been waited on at table by him), there was in this lackey a soul twenty times nobler than that of my grandfather, of my uncle—I will not mention my father and the Jesuit Séraphie. Perhaps my Aunt Elisabeth could alone be compared to him. Poor,

earning little, and disdaining money-making, Falcon would fly a tricolor flag outside his shop at every victory of the armies, and on the festival of the Republic.

He adored the Republic in the time of Napoleon, as under the Bourbons, and died at the age of eighty-two, about 1820, always poor, but with a sense of honor which was delicate in the extreme.

As I passed, I used to look wistfully at Falcon's shop. He had a great wig, perfectly powdered, and, on the lucky days of his beloved Republic, would deck himself in a fine red coat with great steel buttons, in the fashion of the day. He was the finest specimen of the Dauphiné character. His shop was near the Place Saint-André; I can remember his moving there. Falcon came and took the shop A, in the old Palace of the Dauphins, where the Parliament and, later on, the Royal Courts held their sittings. I used to walk under the passage B on purpose to see him. He had a very ugly daughter, a frequent subject of my Aunt Séraphie's jests; she accused her of having love-affairs with the Patriots who came to read the papers in her father's reading-room.

Later on, Falcon set up his shop at A'. I was then bold enough to go and read there. I do not know whether, at the time when I was stealing my uncle's books, I had the hardihood to open a subscription with him; it seems to me that, in some way or other, I used to get books from him.

My dreams took a passionate turn under the influence of *The Life and Adventures of Mme de —*, a highly touching novel, very ridiculous perhaps, for the heroine was taken prisoner by savages. It seems to me that I lent this novel to my friend Romain Colomb, who can still recall it today.

I soon gained possession of the *Nouvelle Héloïse*. I believe I took it from the highest shelf of my father's bookcase at Claix.

I read it lying on my bed, in my "trapezium" at Gre-

noble, taking care to lock my door first, and with transports of happiness and sensuous pleasure impossible to describe. Nowadays this work seems to me pedantic, and even in 1819, during my maddest transports of love, I could not read twenty consecutive pages of it. From that time on, stealing books became my great business.

I had a corner by the side of my father's desk, in the rue des Vieux-Jésuites, in which I laid the books which I liked, half hidden by their lowly position. There were copies of Dante with curious wood engravings, translations of Lucian by Perrot d'Ablancourt (fine, but faithless), the correspondence of Milord All-eye with Milord All-ear, by the Marquis d'Argens, and finally the *Memoirs of a Man of Quality Who Has Retired from the World*.

I found means of having my father's study opened (it had been deserted since the fateful tyranny of Amar and Merlinot), and I made a thorough inspection of all the books. He had a superb collection of Elzevirs, but unfortunately I understood no Latin, though I knew by heart the *Selectæ e Profanis*. I found a few duodecimo volumes above the little door communicating with the drawing-room, and I tried to read a few articles of the *Encyclopédie*. But what was all this compared with *Félicia* and the *Nouvelle Héloïse*?

My literary confidence in my grandfather was entire. I counted on him not to betray me to Séraphie and my father. Without confessing that I had read the *Nouvelle Héloïse*, I ventured to speak to him in praise of it. His conversion to jesuitism cannot have been of long standing; instead of questioning me severely, he related to me that the Baron des Adrets (the only one of his friends with whom he had continued to dine once or twice a month since the death of my mother), at the time when the *Nouvelle Héloïse* appeared (was it not in 1770?), one day kept dinner waiting at his house; Mme des Adrets had it announced to him a second time,

and at last this man, so cold as a rule, appeared in tears.

"What is the matter with you, my dear?" said Mme des Adrets, quite alarmed.

"Ah! Madame, Julie is dead!" And he hardly ate a thing.

I devoured the notices of books for sale which came with the newspapers. My relations used at that time, it seems to me, to take in a paper which they shared with somebody.

I was led to imagine that Florian⁷ must be a sublime book, apparently from the titles: *Gonsalvo of Cordova*, *Estelle*, etc.

I put a little *écu* (three francs) in a letter, and I wrote to a Paris bookseller to send me a certain work of Florian. It was daring of me; what would Séraphie have said on the arrival of the parcel?

But, as a matter of fact, it never did arrive, and with a louis which my grandfather had given me on New Year's Day I bought a Florian. It was from the works of this great man that I drew my first comedy.

⁷ Florian (1755-1794): author of some well-known fables, besides pastorals and romances.



CHAPTER XVII

S raphie had made an intimate friend of a certain Mme Vignon, the chief *boime* in the town (*boime*, in Grenoble, means a sanctimonious hypocrite, a female Jesuit). Mme Vignon lived on a third floor in the Place Saint-Andr , and was, I think, the wife of a procurator; but she was respected like a mother of the Church, getting priests advancement, and always having some of them staying with her. A thing that touched me was that she had a daughter of fifteen who was rather like a white rabbit, with the same big red eyes. I tried in vain to fall in love with her during a visit of a week or two which we made to Claix. There my father did not take any pains to hide, and always occupied his house, which was the finest in the canton.

On this visit there were S raphie, Mme and Mlle Vignon, my sister Pauline, myself, and perhaps a M. Blanc, of Seyssins, a ridiculous person who greatly admired S raphie's bare legs. She used to go out in the park, in the morning, bare-legged, with no stockings.

I was so carried away by the devil that the legs of my most cruel enemy made an impression upon me. I could readily have fallen in love with S raphie. I imagined that it would be an exquisite pleasure to clasp this bitter enemy in my arms.

In spite of the fact that she was a marriageable young woman, she insisted upon having a big unused door opened which led from her bedroom onto the staircase leading to the Place Grenette; and after an abominable scene, in which I can still see the expression of her face,

she had a key made. Apparently her father had refused her the key to this door.

She used to let in her friends through this door, among others Mme Vignon, that female Tartuffe,¹ who used to have special prayers to the saints, and of whom my good grandfather would have had a horror if his character in the style of Fontenelle had allowed him (1) to feel horror; (2) to express it.

My grandfather uttered about this Mme Vignon his worst oath: may the devil spit at your behind.

My father was still in hiding at Grenoble—I mean to say, he lived at my grandfather's and did not go out during the day. Political passion lasted only for eighteen months. I can see myself being sent by him to Allier the bookseller, in the Place Saint-André, with fifty francs in assignats, to buy Fourcroy's Chemistry, which started his passion for agriculture. I can well understand how this taste arose: Claix was the only place where he could walk abroad.

But was not all this caused by his love-intrigue with Séraphie, if such an affair really existed? I cannot see the real aspect of things, I have only the memories of a child. I see pictures, I remember their effect on my heart, but as to their causes and character there is a blank. It is always like the frescoes of the Campo-Santo at Pisa, where one sees clearly an arm, but the piece beside it, which represented the head, has fallen away. I see a succession of pictures, very distinct, but with no aspect other than that which they had in relation to me. What is more, I can arrive at this aspect only by the memory of the effect which it produced upon me.

My father soon experienced a feeling worthy of the heart of a tyrant. I had a tame thrush, which usually took up its position under the chairs in the dining-room. It had lost a foot in the wars, and walked with a hop. It used to defend itself against the cats and dogs, and

¹ Tartuffe: a sanctimonious hypocrite, derived from the principal character in Molière's play of that name.

everybody protected it, which was a mark of great kindness to me, for it covered the floor with white spots which were not very clean. I used to feed this thrush in a not very nice way, with the beetles (*chapplepans* they were called locally) drowned in the *benne*, or wastewater pail in the kitchen.

Rigorously separated as I was from every creature of my own age, and living with none but old people, this childish trifle had a charm for me.

All of a sudden the thrush disappeared, nobody would tell me how: somebody had inadvertently crushed it in opening a door. I thought my father had killed it out of spite; he knew this, and was hurt at my idea; one day he alluded to it in very delicate, roundabout terms.

I was sublime; I blushed up to the roots of my hair, but I did not open my lips. He pressed me for an answer, the same silence met him; but my eyes, which were very expressive at that age, must have spoken for me.

Thus was I revenged, tyrant, for the mild, paternal manner with which you so often forced me to take that detestable walk to Les Granges, among the fields watered with night-soil from the town.

For more than a month I was proud of this vengeance; I like that in a child.

My father's passion for his demesne at Claix and for agriculture became extreme. He had great repairs and improvements made; for instance, the land was trenched, dug down to a depth of two and a half feet, and all the stones bigger than an egg carried into a corner of the field. Jean Vial, our old gardener, Charrière, Mayousse, and an old soldier carried out these works at piece rates; for instance, twenty *écus* (sixty francs) for trenching, a *tière*, the strip of land between two rows of *hautaiès*, or maples up which vines were trained.

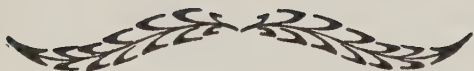
My father planted the Grandes Barres and then the Jomate, where he grubbed up the low-growing vines. He obtained, by an exchange with the hospital (which had

got it, as it seems to me, under the will of a M. Gutin, a cloth merchant), the vineyard of Molard (between the orchard and our piece of land, also called Molard). He grubbed up the vines, trenched it, buried the *Murger*, a heap of stones seven to ten feet high, and finally planted it.

He used to discourse to me at length of all these projects; he had become a typical landowner of the Midi.

There is a kind of mania which is often met with south of Lyons and of Tours. This mania consists in buying some fields which bring in one or two per cent; calling in, for the purpose, money lent at five or six per cent; and sometimes borrowing at five per cent, in order to "round off the property" (that is the term they use) by buying the fields between the two. A Minister of the Interior who had any idea of his functions would lead a crusade against this mania in the twenty departments south of Tours and Lyons, for it causes embarrassments, and destroys all that part of happiness which depends on money.

My father was a memorable example of this mania, which has its source at once in avarice, in pride, and in the mania for nobility.



CHAPTER XVIII

This mania, which ended by completely ruining my father and reducing me to my third share in my mother's dowry as my whole fortune, brought me great comfort about 1794.

But before going any further, I must dispose of the story of my first communion, which, it seems to me, was previous to the 21st of July 1794.

The priest who was entrusted with the great ceremony of my first communion, to which my father, who was excessively religious at that time, attached the greatest importance, was, I must admit, far less of a rogue than the Abbé Raillane. The jesuitry of the Abbé Raillane alarmed even my father: this is how M. Coissi, in this very place, frightened the Jesuit.

This good priest, such a good fellow to all appearance, was called Dumolard, and was a peasant of great ingenuousness born in the neighborhood of La Matheysine or La Mure, near Le Bourg d'Oisans. He has since become a great Jesuit, and has obtained the charming parish of La Tronche, ten minutes from Grenoble. (It corresponds to the *sous-préfecture* of Sceaux for a *sous-préfet* who has done a minister's dirty work or married one of his illegitimate daughters.)

At that time M. Dumolard was so good-natured that I was able to lend him a little Italian edition of Ariosto in four tiny volumes. But perhaps I did not lend it to him till 1803.

M. Dumolard's face was not bad, except for one eye which was always closed; he was one-eyed, to speak

plainly, but his features were good, and expressive not only of good nature but, what is much more absurd, of a gay and perfect frankness. He was really not a rogue at that time, and I may say, on thinking it over, that the discernment of my twelve years, developed by solitude, was completely deceived, for he afterward became more profoundly jesuitical than anyone else in the town; and besides, his exceptionally good parish, within reach of all the pious ladies in the town, testifies in his favor as against my simple-mindedness at the age of twelve.

M. de Barral, First President of the Royal Courts, the most indulgent and well-bred of men, said to me, about 1816, I think, while walking with me round his splendid garden at La Tronche, adjoining the parish priest's residence:

"This Dumolard is one of the most out-and-out rascals of the lot."

"And M. Raillane?" I said.

"Oh! Raillane beats them all. How could your father have chosen such a man?"

"Indeed I don't know; I was a victim and not an accomplice."

For two or three years M. Dumolard had often said Mass in our house, in my grandfather's Italian drawing-room. The Terror, which never was a Terror in Dauphiné, never noticed that eighty or a hundred pious people left my grandfather's house every Sunday, at mid-day. I forgot to say that when I was quite small I was made to serve at these Masses, and discharged my functions only too well. I had a very grave and decorous manner. Throughout my whole life, religious ceremonies have moved me extremely. For a long time I served at Mass for that rogue the Abbé Raillane, who used to go and say it at the Convent of the Propagation, at the end of the rue Saint-Jacques, on the left; it was a convent, and we used to say our Mass in the tribune.

We were such children, Reytiers and I, that one day something momentous happened, when Reytiers, appar-

ently out of nervousness, relieved himself during the Mass, at which I was serving, on a *prie-Dieu* of firewood. The poor wretch kept trying to absorb the moisture thus produced, to his great shame, by rubbing his knee against the horizontal ledge of the *prie-Dieu*. It was a great scene. We used often to go in and see the nuns. One of them, who was tall and of a fine figure, attracted me very much; this was no doubt noticed, for in these matters I have always been a blunderer, and I never saw her again. One thing I noticed was that the abbess had a quantity of blackheads on the tip of her nose; I thought that horrid.

The Government had fallen into the abominable folly of persecuting the priests. The good sense of Grenoble and its distrust of Paris saved us from the sterner aspects of this folly.

The priests said that they were badly persecuted, but sixty pious women used to come at eleven in the morning to hear Mass in my grandfather's drawing-room. The police could not even pretend to be ignorant of it. The people leaving our Mass made a crowd in the Grande-rue.



CHAPTER XIX

My father was struck off the list of suspects (which had been the sole object of our ambition for twenty-one months) on the 21st of July 1794, thanks to the aid of my pretty cousin Josephine Martin's fine eyes.

He used then to make long visits to Claix (that is, to Furonnières). My independence, like the liberties of the Italian towns toward the eighth century, arose out of the weakness of my tyrants.

During my father's absences I devised the scheme of going to work in the rue des Vieux-Jésuites, in the drawing-room of our apartment, inside which nobody had set foot for four years.

This idea, arising, like all the inventions of mechanics, out of the need of the moment, had immense advantages. Firstly, I went alone to the rue des Vieux-Jésuites, two hundred yards from the Gagnons' house; secondly, I was there protected from the incursions of Séraphie, who at my grandfather's, when possessed by a more than usually diabolical fit of energy, used to come and inspect my books and rummage among my papers.

Undisturbed in the silent drawing-room, where there was the fine set of furniture covered with my poor mother's embroideries, I began to work with pleasure. I wrote my comedy called, I believe, *M. Piklar*.

I always waited to write until the moment of genius arrived.

I was not cured of this mania till very late. If I had driven it away sooner, I should have finished my comedy of Letellier and Saint-Bernard, which I took to Moscow,

and, what is more, brought back again (and which is among my papers at Paris). This silliness has had a very bad effect upon the quantity of my works. In 1806, again, I awaited the moment of genius before beginning to write. Throughout the whole course of my life, I have never spoken about the things which interested me most passionately; any criticism would have cut me to the heart. But I have never talked literature. My friend M. Adolphe de Mareste (born at Grenoble about 1782), with whom I was most intimate at that time, wrote to me at Milan to give me his opinion of my *Lives of Haydn, Mozart, and Metastasio*. He had no idea that I was the author.

If I had spoken, toward 1795, about my intention to write, some sensible man would have said: "Write for two hours a day, genius or no genius." This remark would have helped me to fill ten years of my life, which I stupidly wasted in waiting on genius.

My imagination had been employed in providing against the harm which my tyrants were likely to do, and in cursing them; as soon as I was free, at H in my mother's drawing-room, I had time to develop some sort of taste. My passion was for medals modeled in plaster on molds or hollows of sulphur. Before that, I had had a minor passion: the love of *épinaux*, knotted sticks cut from a thorn hedge, I believe, and hunting.

My father and Séraphie had suppressed both of these. The passion for thorn sticks disappeared before my uncle's banter; that for hunting, reinforced by the voluptuous dreams which were fed by M. Le Roy's landscape and the lively mirages which my mind would weave while reading Ariosto, became a madness, making me love *La Maison rustique* and Buffon, and write about animals, and only perishing at last of satiety. At Brunswick, in 1808, I was one of the leaders of a hunt in which we killed fifty or sixty hares in *battues* in which the peasants were our drivers. I had a horror of killing a hind, and this horror has increased. Today nothing

seems to me more ignoble than to transform a charming bird into four ounces of dead flesh.

If my father, out of bourgeois timidity, had allowed me to go hunting, I should have been more nimble, which would have been useful to me in war. I was nimble in war only by dint of effort.

I will talk of hunting later; let us return to the medals.



CHAPTER XX

After four or five years of the deepest and most unrelieved unhappiness, I breathed freely only when I found myself alone, locked into the apartment of the rue des Vieux-Jésuites, which I had hitherto abhorred. During these four or five years my heart had been filled with a sentiment of impotent hatred. If it had not been for my taste for sensuous pleasure, I should perhaps, after an education like this, of whose real nature those who gave it were unconscious, have become a black-hearted scoundrel or a courteous, insinuating rogue, a true Jesuit, and I should undoubtedly be very rich. Reading the *Nouvelle Héloïse* and the scruples of Saint-Preux formed my character as a man of deep integrity; after reading it, with tears and transports of love of virtue, I might still have committed knavish actions, but I should have been conscious of my knavery. And so it was a book read in the greatest secrecy, and against the wishes of my parents, that made me a man of integrity.

The Roman history of the long-winded Rollin, in spite of his dull comments, had furnished my mind with facts of solid value (based on the utility, not on the vain honor, of monarchies; Saint-Simon is an excellent document in support of Montesquieu's treatment of the "honor" of monarchies in the low sense; it was not bad to see this in 1734, considering the childish condition in which the reason of the French people still was at that date).

Given the facts I learned in Rollin, confirmed, explained,

and illustrated by the daily conversation of my excellent grandfather and the theories of Saint-Preux, nothing could equal the repugnance and profound contempt which I had for the views expounded by the priests, whom I saw every day grieving over the victories of their country and desiring that the French troops should be beaten.

The conversation of my excellent grandfather, to whom I owe everything, his veneration for the benefactors of humanity—so opposed to the ideas of Christianity—no doubt prevented me from being caught like a fly in a spider's web by my respect for ceremonies. (I see nowadays that this was the first form taken by my love for music [1], painting [2], and the art of Vigano [3].) I am inclined to believe that my grandfather was a recent convert about 1793. Perhaps he had become religious on the death of my mother (1790), perhaps the necessity for gaining the support of the clergy in his profession as a doctor had forced upon him a slight veneer of hypocrisy as well as the wig with three rows of curls.

I should think the latter reason was probably the true one, for I found he was an old friend of the Abbé Sadin, parish priest of Saint-Louis (his parish church), of Canon Rey and Mlle Rey, his sister, whom we often went to see (my Aunt Elisabeth went there for a game of cards), in a little street behind Saint-André's Church, later the rue du Département, even the amiable—too amiable—Abbé Hélie, parish priest of Saint-Hugues, who had baptized me, and reminded me of it in after years at the Café de la Régence in Paris, where I used to lunch about 1803, during my real education, in the rue D'Angiviller.

It must be observed that in 1790 priests did not push their theories to their logical consequences, and were far from being as intolerant and absurd as we see them in 1835. It was readily tolerated that my grandfather should work in the presence of his little bust of Voltaire, and that his conversation, save on a single subject, should

be what it would have been in the *salon* of Voltaire; and, when occasion arose, the three days which he had passed in this *salon* were mentioned by him as the most brilliant in his life. He never denied himself a critical or scandalous anecdote about priests, and during his long career of observation, his wise, cold intelligence had collected hundreds. He never exaggerated, he never lied—which enables me today, as it seems to me, to advance the opinion that he was not a bourgeois so far as his mind was concerned; but he was apt to conceive eternal hatreds on the ground of trifling faults, and I cannot quite exonerate his soul from the reproach of being bourgeois.

I find the bourgeois type even at Rome, in M. — and his family—M. Bois, the brother-in-law who has made money.

My grandfather had a love and veneration for great men which greatly shocked the present parish priest of Saint-Louis, and the present Vicar-General of the Bishop of Grenoble, who makes it a point of honor not to return the Prefect's call, in his capacity of Prince-Bishop of Grenoble, I believe (told me by M. Rubichon with approbation, Civit -Vecchia, June 1835).

Father Ducros, the Franciscan, whom I consider to have been a man of genius, destroyed his health by using poison for stuffing birds. He suffered badly from an intestinal disease, and my uncle gave me to understand by his jokes that he had a ⁽¹⁾. I did not see the point about this illness, which seemed to me quite natural. Father Ducros was very fond of my grandfather, who was his doctor, and to whom he was partly indebted for his position as librarian. But he could not help having a touch of contempt for the weakness of his character; he could not tolerate S raphie's outbursts, which often went so far as to interrupt conversation, embarrass our society, and force our friends to retire.

¹ Word missing in French text. Note says: "illegible in original MS."

Characters of the Fontenelle type are very sensitive to this shade of implied contempt, so my grandfather often opposed my enthusiasm for Father Ducros. Sometimes, when Father Ducros arrived at the house with something interesting to say, I was sent to the kitchen; I was not in the least offended, only annoyed at not knowing the curious piece of news. This philosopher was touched by my eagerness and the lively preference which I showed for him, which were the reasons why I never left the room while he was there.

He used to present his friends, both masculine and feminine, with gilt frames, measuring two and a half feet by three, filled with a big sheet of glass, behind which he arranged six or eight dozen plaster medals an inch and a half in diameter. They were of all the Roman emperors and empresses; another frame showed all the great men of France, from Clément Marot to Voltaire, Diderot, and d'Alembert. What would the M. Rey of today say at such a sight?

These medals were most gracefully mounted in little pieces of gilt-edged cardboard, and scroll-shaped ornaments carried out in the same material filled the spaces between the medals. Ornaments of this kind were very rare then, and I must confess that the contrast between the dull white color of the medals, with the fine, light, well-defined shadows which outlined the features of the heads, and the gilt edge of the cards, with their golden-yellow tint, produced a most elegant effect.

The bourgeois of Vienne, Romans, La Tour du Pin, Voiron, etc., who came to dine with my grandfather were never tired of admiring these showcases. For my part, perched on a chair, I never tired of studying the features of these famous men, whose lives I should have liked to imitate and whose works I should have liked to read.

Father Ducros used to write at the top of the highest row of these cards:

FAMOUS FRENCHMEN

or

EMPERORS and EMPRESSES

At Voïron, for instance, at the house of my cousin Allard du Plantier (a descendant of Allard the historian and antiquarian), these cases were admired as containing antique medals; I am not even sure that my cousin, who was not very well up in these matters, did not actually take them for antique medals. (He was a son whose intelligence was stunted by a clever father as Monseigneur's² was by Louis XIV.)

One day Father Ducros said to me: "Would you like me to teach you to make medals?"

It was as if the heavens had opened above me. I went to his rooms, which were really delightful for a man who loves to think, and such as I should like to have to finish my days in.

Four little rooms, ten feet high, with a southwest aspect, and a very pretty view over Saint-Joseph, the hills of Eybens, the bridge of Claix, and the infinite ranges of mountains in the direction of Gap.

These rooms were filled with bas-reliefs and medals modeled after the antique or passable modern works.

The medals were mostly of red sulphur (reddened with a mixture of cinnabar), which is fine and imposing; in fact, there was not a square foot of the surface of these apartments which did not suggest an idea. There were also some pictures. "But I am not rich enough," Father Ducros would say, "to buy those which I should like." The principal picture represented a snow scene; it was not altogether bad.

My grandfather had several times taken me to these charming rooms. As soon as I was alone with my grand-

² Monseigneur: Louis the Dauphin, the only son of Louis XIV, who died in 1711, before his father.

father outside the house, well out of reach of my father and Séraphie, I was of a perfect gaiety. I walked very slowly, for my good grandfather had rheumatism, which I suppose was of gouty origin (for I, who am a true grandson of his, and have the same constitution, had the gout in May 1835 at Cività-Vecchia).

Father Ducros was comfortably off, for he made M. Navizet of Saint-Laurent, a retired leather-manufacturer, his heir; he was very well waited upon by a big, tall valet, a good fellow who was the library attendant, and an excellent woman servant. I used to give them all something at the New Year, by the advice of my Aunt Elisabeth.

I was as unsophisticated as possible, owing to the miracle of this abominable, solitary education; a whole family setting upon one poor child to instruct him, on a thoroughly well-carried-out system, because the family sorrow made them find pleasure in it.

This inexperience of the simplest things made me make many blunders at old M. Daru's from November 1799 to May 1800.

Let us return to the medals: Father Ducros had procured a quantity of plaster medals, by what means I do not know. He soaked them in oil and over this oil ran sulphur mixed with well-dried powdered slate.

When this mold was quite cold, he put into it a little oil, surrounded it with an oiled paper a quarter of an inch high from A to B, with the mold at the bottom of it.

On the mold he poured freshly made liquid plaster and immediately afterward some less fine stronger plaster, so as to make the plaster medal a third of an inch thick. This is what I never managed to do. I did not mix my plaster with water fast enough, or, rather, I let it spoil by exposure to the air. It was no use for Saint- —, the old servant, to bring me powdered plaster. Five or six hours after placing it on the sulphur mold, I found my plaster a jelly.

But, the molds being more difficult, I made them on the spot very well, only I made them too thick. I did not stint the materials.

I set up my workshop for plasterwork in my poor mother's dressing-room, and entered her bedroom, into which nobody had been for five years except with a sentiment of religious veneration. I avoided looking at the bed. I should never have laughed in this room, which had on its walls a Lyons wallpaper, a good imitation of red damask.

Although I never got so far as to make a showcase for medals, like Father Ducros, I was constantly preparing myself for this great glory by making a quantity of sulphur models (at B, in the kitchen).

I bought a great cupboard with twelve or fifteen drawers, three inches deep, in which I hoarded my wealth.

I left all this at Grenoble in 1799. From 1796 I no longer cared about it; they must have made matches of these precious molds (or hollows) of slate-colored sulphur.

I read the dictionary of medals of the *Encyclopédie méthodique*.

A clever master who had known how to take advantage of this taste would have made me study all ancient history with passionate interest; they ought to have made me read Suetonius, and then Dionysius of Halicarnassus, as my young head became capable of taking in serious ideas.

But the taste then prevalent at Grenoble was for reading and quoting the letters of M. de Bonnard, a small Dorat (just as we say "small beer"). My grandfather used to speak respectfully of Montesquieu's *Grandeur des Romains*, but I could not understand it at all; it is not very hard to believe, but I was ignorant of the events upon which Montesquieu has based his splendid considerations.

They ought at least to have made me read Livy; in-

stead of that, they made me read and admire the hymns of Santeuil: "*Ecce sede tonantes . . .*" You can imagine in what spirit I received this religion of my tyrants.

The priests who used to dine at our house tried to acknowledge the hospitality of my relatives by being pathetic to me about the *Royaumont Bible*,³ the insinuating honeyed tone of which inspired me with the most profound disgust. I was a hundred times fonder of the New Testament in Latin, which I had learned entirely by heart from a miniature copy. My relations, like the kings of today, wanted religion to keep me in submission, while, for my part, I breathed nothing but revolt.

I saw the Allobrogian Legion⁴ march past (the one, I believe, which was commended by M. Caffé, who died at the Invalides, at the age of eighty-five, in November or December 1835); my great thought was the army. Should I not do well to enlist?

I often went out alone; I went to the Gardens, but I found the other children too familiar. From a distance I longed to play with them, but at close quarters I found them rough.

I even began, I think, to go to the theater, which I used to leave at the most interesting moment, at nine o'clock in summer, when I heard the sound of the bell of Saint-André's, the *Sing*, or *Saint*, as it was called.

Everything that had to do with tyranny revolted me, and I did not love the powers that be. I did my lessons (compositions, translations, verses on the fly drowned in a bowl of milk) on a pretty little walnut table in the anteroom to the great Italian drawing-room, except on Sundays, on account of our Mass; the door opening onto

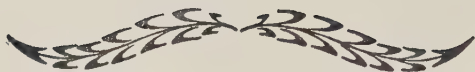
³ *Royaumont Bible*: a collection of Scripture extracts published in 1674, under the title of *Old and New Testament History*, by "Royaumont, Prior of Sombreval," the pseudonym of Nicholas Fontaine.

⁴ *Allobrogian Legion*: the republican army of Savoy, which, after its conquest by General Montesquiou in 1792, was turned into the "Republic of the Allobroges," after the name of the Gaulish tribe which inhabited the region in Roman days.

the principal staircase was always shut. I took it into my head to write on the wood of this table the names of all the murderers of princes—for instance, “Poltrót, Duke of Guise, in 1562.” My grandfather, while helping me to do my verses, or, rather, while doing them himself, saw this list; his peacefully inclined spirit, opposed to all violence, was distressed by it, and he almost concluded from it that Séraphie was right when she maintained that I had an abominable character. Perhaps I had been led to make my list of assassins by the deed of Charlotte Corday (July 11 or 12, 1793), for whom I had a wild admiration. At that time I was very enthusiastic about Cato of Utica; the mawkish and Christian reflections of the good Rollin, as my grandfather called him, seemed to me the height of silliness.

And at the same time I was such a child that, having found in Rollin’s *Histoire ancienne*, I think, a character called Aristocrate, I was amazed at this circumstance and imparted my enthusiasm to my sister Pauline, who was a liberal, and on my side against Zénaïde-Caroline, who was attached to Séraphie’s party, and whom we called a spy.

Before or after this, I had had a violent taste for optics, which led me to read Smith’s *Optics* at the public library. I made some spectacles for looking at my neighbor while appearing to look straight before me. With a little cleverness, again, they could easily have started me by this means on the science of optics, and made me learn a good deal of mathematics. From that to astronomy, it was only a step.



CHAPTER XXI

When I used to ask my father for money justly—for instance, when he had promised it to me—he would grumble and be cross, and instead of the six francs he had promised, would give me three. This incensed me. What! Not to keep a promise!

The Spanish sentiments which I had acquired from my Aunt Elisabeth kept me living in the clouds; I thought of nothing but honor and heroism. I had not the least artifice, not the smallest art of subterfuge, not the slightest trace of mealy-mouthed or jesuitical hypocrisy.

This defect has survived all my experience, my reasoning, and the countless times that I have been deceived by this “Castilianism,” or Spanish spirit.

I have still this lack of worldly wisdom. Every day, out of “Castilianism,” I am cheated of a *paolo* or two when buying the smallest thing. The mortification which this causes me an hour afterward has ended by giving me the habit of buying very little. I allow myself to go without a little piece of furniture which will cost me twelve francs, for as much as a year, because of my certainty that I shall be cheated, and that this will put me into a bad temper; and this bad temper is greater than the pleasure of having the piece of furniture.

I am writing this standing at a desk *à la Tronchin*, made by a carpenter who had never seen such a thing. For a year I went without it, because of my annoyance at the thought of being cheated. Finally, I took the precaution of not going to speak to the carpenter on my way home from the café, at eleven o'clock in the morn-

ing, for then my character is at its height of impetuosity (exactly as in 1803, when I took some inflammatory coffee in the rue Saint-Honoré, at the corner of the rue de Grenelle or d'Orléans); but at a time when I was tired, and my Tronchin desk cost me only four and a half *écus* (or $4 \times 5,45 = 24$ Fr. 52).

This characteristic of mine was the reason why my discussions about money, such a thorny subject between a father of fifty-one and a son of fifteen, generally finished on my side by a fit of utter contempt and concentrated indignation. Sometimes, not out of artifice but by pure chance, I would talk eloquently to my father about the thing which I wanted to buy; unconsciously I infected him with my fever (I gave him a little of my passion), and then he would give me everything that I needed without any difficulty, and even with pleasure. One day when there was a fair in the Place Grenette, while he was in hiding, I spoke to him of my desire to have some of those movable letters which are cut out of a slip of brass as big as a playing-card; he gave me six or seven assignats of fifteen sous, but when I came back I had spent it all.

"You always spend all the money I give you."

By giving me these assignats of fifteen sous, he had shown signs of what, in so ungracious a character, might be called grace, and so I found his reproaches very just. If my relatives had known how to manage me, they would have turned me into an idiot like those of whom I see so many in the provinces. The indignation which I have felt to the highest degree ever since my childhood, owing to my Spanish sentiments, has created in me, in spite of my family, the character which I now have. But what is this character? I should find it very hard to tell. Perhaps I shall see the truth at the age of sixty-five, if I ever reach it.

A beggar who addresses me in the tragic style, as in Rome, or in the style of comedy, as in France, makes me indignant: (1) I detest being disturbed in my rev-

erie; (2) I do not believe a word of what he says to me.

Yesterday, as I passed her in the street, a woman of the people aged forty, but quite good-looking, said to a man who was walking with her: "*Bisogna camparar*" (one must live somehow). This remark, bearing no trace of comedy, touched me to tears. I never give to poor people who beg from me, and I do not think this is through avarice. When the big health officer (11th of December) at Cività-Vecchia spoke to me of a poor Portuguese man at the lazaret who asks for only six ⁽¹⁾ a day, I immediately gave him six or eight *paoli* in small change. When he refused them, for fear of getting into trouble with his chief (a rough peasant named Manelli, coming from Finevista), I thought that it would be more worthy of a consul to give an *écu*, which I did; six *paoli*, then, out of true humanity and four because of the embroidery on my coat.

Apropos of financial discussions between father and son: the Marquis Torrigiani, of Florence (a great gambler in his youth, and generally accused of winning in a way which he ought not), saw that his three sons used sometimes to lose ten or fifteen louis at cards. In order to save them the annoyance of asking him for money, he handed over three thousand francs to a faithful old porter, with the order to give this money to his sons when they had lost, and to ask him for another three thousand when the first was spent.

This is admirable in itself, and, moreover, his action touched his sons, who became more moderate. This marquis, an officer of the Legion of Honor, is the father of Mme Pozzi, whose fine eyes aroused such lively admiration in me in 1817. The anecdote about her father's gambling would have given me terrible pain in 1817, by reason of the accursed "Castilianism" of my character, of which I was complaining some time ago. This "Spanish spirit" prevents me from having the comic genius.

¹ Word illegible in original French. Probably word is *paoli*.

1. I avert my eyes, and my memory, from all that is base;

2. I sympathize, as at the age of ten when I was reading Ariosto, with everything in the nature of love-stories, forests (the woods and their vast silence), or generosity.

The most ordinary Spanish tale, if it tells of generosity, brings tears to my eyes, while I turn my eyes away from the character of Molière's Chrysale² and, still more, from the fundamentally bad nature of Zadig, Candide, the poor devil, and other works of Voltaire. The only lines of his that I adore are:

Vous êtes, lui dit-il, l'existence et l'essence,
Simple avec attribut et de pure substance.³

Barral (the Comte Paul Barral, born at Grenoble about 1785) inspired me at a very early age with his liking for these lines, which his father, the President of the Court, had taught him.

This "Castilianism," with which my Aunt Elisabeth had infected me, causes me, even at my age, to be taken for an inexperienced child, for a madman "getting more and more incapable of any serious business," as my cousin Colomb, a thorough bourgeois, said in these very terms.

The conversation of a thorough bourgeois on "men and life," which is nothing but a collection of these ugly details, throws me into a fit of deep depression when I am forced by some social necessity to listen to it for any length of time.

This is the secret of my horror of Grenoble about 1816, which I was then unable to explain.

I am still unable to explain to myself today, at the age of fifty-two, the disposition to unhappiness which is caused me by Sundays. It reaches such a pitch that if,

²Chrysale: the philistine husband in *Les Femmes Savantes*.

³You are, he said to him, both essence and existence,
Simple with attribute, and made of pure substance.

when I am happy and gay, I walk two hundred yards down the street and notice that the shops are shut, "Ah!" I say, "it is Sunday!"

That very moment, all my inner tendency toward happiness evaporates.

Is it envy for the happy look of the workmen and bourgeois in their best clothes?

It is no use saying to myself: "But I lose fifty-two Sundays in the year like this, and perhaps ten feast days." It is too much for me, and my only resource is to be found in persistent work.

This fault—my horror of Chrysale—has perhaps kept me young. It must, then, be a fortunate misfortune, like that of having possessed few women (women like Bianca Milai, whom I failed to win in Paris one morning about 1829, solely through not seeing that the propitious moment had arrived—she had on a black velvet dress that day, about the rue du Helder or du Mont-Blanc).

As I have possessed hardly any women of that sort (thoroughly middle-class women), I am not in the least blasé at the age of fifty. I mean blasé in the moral sense, for the physical side, as is natural, has largely lost its force, so much so that I quite easily pass a fortnight or three weeks without a woman; this Lenten period troubles me only for the first week.

Most of my apparent follies, especially the stupidity of not seizing opportunity in its flight—opportunity "which is bald," as Don Japhet of Armenia⁴ said—all the times when I have been cheated in buying, etc., are due to the "Castilianism" with which I was infected by my Aunt Elisabeth, for whom I had always the most profound respect, a respect so profound that it prevented my affection from becoming tender. They are also, as it seems to me, due to reading Ariosto when I was so young, and with so much pleasure. (Nowadays, Ariosto's heroes seem to me to be grooms, whose sole merit is in their

⁴Don Japhet of Armenia: in Scarron's play of that name (1653).

strength. This brings me into controversy with those people of intelligence who rate Ariosto far above Tasso, while in my eyes Tasso, when by good fortune he forgets to imitate Virgil or Homer, is the most touching of poets.)

In less than an hour I have written these twelve pages, pausing from time to time so as to try not to write things which are not clear, which I should have to strike out.

How could I have written well *physically*, M. Colomb? My friend Colomb, who crushes me with this reproach in his letters of yesterday and preceding days, would go through torture for his word, or for me. (He was born at Lyons about 1785. His father, formerly a merchant of sterling character, retired to Grenoble about 1788. M. Romain Colomb has an income of twenty thousand or twenty-five thousand francs and three daughters, rue Godot-de-Mauroy, Paris.)



CHAPTER XXII

The siege of Lyons was agitating the whole of the Midi; I was for Kellermann and the Republicans, my relatives for the *émigrés* and Précý (without Monsieur, as they said).

My cousin Senterre, of the post office, whose cousin or nephew was fighting at Lyons, would come to our house twice a day; as it was summer, we took our morning *café au lait* in the natural-history anteroom which opened onto the terrace.

It is perhaps at the point H that I have experienced the greatest transports of love for my country, and hatred for its enemies, the "aristocrats" (the legitimists of 1835) and priests.

M. Senterre, who was an employee in the post office, regularly brought us six or seven newspapers purloined from the subscribers, who did not receive them till two hours later, owing to our curiosity. He had his drop of wine and his bread, and listened while we read the papers. Often he had news from Lyons.

I used to go alone onto the terrace in the evening to try and hear the cannon of Lyons. I see in the *Chronological Table*, the only book which I have at Rome, that Lyons was taken on the 9th of October 1793. So it was during the year 1793, when I was ten, that I went to listen to the cannon of Lyons; I never heard it. I used to look longingly at the mountain of Méaudre (pronounced *Mioudre*), from which it could be heard. Our good cousin Romagnier (a cousin by his marriage with a Mlle

Blanchet, who was related to my grandfather's wife) came from Méaudre, where he went every two months to see his father. On his return he made my heart beat by saying: "We can hear the cannon of Lyons quite well, especially in the evening, at sunset, and when the wind is in the northwest [*nordoua*, as he pronounced it]."

I gazed at the point B with the keenest desire to go there, but it was a desire which I had to be careful not to express.

I ought perhaps to have put this detail much earlier, but I repeat that, for my childhood, I have nothing but very clear pictures, which have no date and nothing to suggest their real significance.

I write them down just as they occur to me.

I have no books, and I do not want to read any book; I hardly ever make use of the stupid *Chronology*, which bears the name of that cold, subtle man M. Loïs Weymar. I shall do the same for the campaign of Marengo (1800), for that of 1809, for the Moscow campaign, for that of 1813, when I was a commissariat officer at Sagan (in Silesia, on the Bober); I make no pretense of writing a history, I am simply making note of what I remember, in order to make out what manner of man I have been: stupid or witty, timid or courageous, etc., etc. It is the answer to that great dictum:

Γγῶθι σεαυτόν: Know thyself.

During this summer of 1793 the siege of Toulon stirred me greatly; it goes without saying that my relations approved of the traitors who surrendered it. However, my Aunt Elisabeth, with her Castilian pride, said to me:

[There is a gap in the original text.]

I saw the departure of General Carteau, or Cartaud, who held a parade on the Place Grenette. I can still see his name on the baggage wagons going slowly and noisily past along the rue Montorge, on the way to Toulon.



A great event was in preparation for me: I was very much moved by it at the moment, but it was too late; all bonds of friendship between my father and me had been forever broken, and my horror of middle-class details and of Grenoble was henceforth invincible.

My Aunt Séraphie had been ill for a long time. At last the word "danger" was mentioned; it was the good Marion (Marie Thomasset), my friend, who pronounced this great word. The danger became pressing, and the priests flocked round.

One winter evening, as it seems to me, I was in the kitchen, about seven o'clock in the evening, at the point H, opposite Marion's cupboard. Someone came and said: "She has passed away." I threw myself on my knees at the point H to thank God for this great deliverance.

If Parisians are as foolish in 1880 as they are in 1835, this way of taking the death of my mother's sister will cause me to be looked upon as barbarous, cruel, and abominable.

However that may be, it is the truth. After the first week of funeral Masses and prayers, everybody in the house had a feeling of great relief. I think even my father was very glad to be delivered from this diabolical mistress—if, indeed, she was his mistress—or from this diabolical intimate friend.

One of her last acts had been to exclaim, one evening when I was reading the *Henriade* or *Bélisaire*, which my grandfather had just lent me, on my Aunt Elisabeth's chest of drawers, at the point H: "How can anyone give such books to that child! Who gave him that book?"

My excellent grandfather, at my urgent request, had had the kindness to go with me, in spite of the cold, as far as his study, which adjoined the terrace at the other end of the house, and give me that book, for which I was longing that evening.

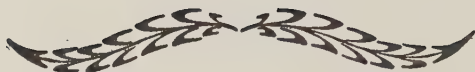
The whole family was ranged in front of the fire, like a string of onions, at the point D. The expression "string

of onions" was constantly in people's mouths at Grenoble.

My grandfather's only reply to his daughter's insolent reproach was to shrug his shoulders and say: "She is ill."

I am entirely ignorant of the date of her death; I shall be able to have it copied from the register of births and deaths at Grenoble.

It seems to me that soon afterward I went to the Central School, a thing which Séraphie would never have permitted. I think that it was about 1797, and that I was at the Central School for only three years.



CHAPTER XXIII

The Central School

Many years after, about 1817, I learned from M. de Tracy that it was he who was chiefly responsible for the excellent law on the Central Schools.

My grandfather was a very dignified president of the jury whose duty it was to submit the names of the masters to the departmental administration and to organize the school. My grandfather adored literature and education, and for forty years he had been at the head of all literary and liberal enterprises in Grenoble.

Séraphie had reproved him sharply for accepting the functions of a member of the organizing jury, but the founder of the public library owed it to the respect which he enjoyed in society to be the head of the Central School.

My tutor Durand, who came to give me lessons at the house, was the Latin master; how could I fail to attend his lessons at the Central School? If Séraphie had lived, she would have found a reason, but, as matters stood, my father confined himself to making some profound and grave remarks on the danger of evil communications' corrupting good manners. I was beside myself with joy; an opening ceremony was held in the hall of the library, at which my grandfather made a speech.

Perhaps that is the crowded assembly in the first room SS, of which I have a picture in my mind's eye.

The masters were MM. Durand, for the Latin lan-

guage; Gattel, general grammar and even logic, as it seems to me; Dubois-Fontanelle, author of the tragedy *Ericie, ou la Vestale*, and for twenty-two years editor of the *Gazette des Deux-Ponts*, literature; Troussel, a young doctor, chemistry; Jay, a great braggadocio five feet ten tall (without a scrap of talent, but good at arousing children's enthusiasm), drawing; he had soon three hundred pupils; Chalvet (Pierre Vincent), a poor, dissolute young man, a real author, but with no talent, history—it was also his duty to receive the entrance money, part of which he squandered with the help of his three sisters, great prostitutes by profession, who gave him a new attack of syphilis of which he died soon afterward; lastly, Dupuy, the most bombastic and fatherly bourgeois I have ever seen, was professor of mathematics—without a scrap of talent. He was hardly as much as a surveyor, and he was appointed in a town where they had a Gros! But my grandfather did not know a word of mathematics, and hated it; besides, the pomposity of Father Dupuy (as we called him; he used to call us “children”) was well calculated to bring him the general esteem of Grenoble. This empty-headed man said, however, one important thing: “My child, study Condillac’s *Logic*; it is the foundation of everything.”

Nothing better could be said today, if, however, we substitute for the name of Condillac that of Tracy. The best of it is that I do not believe M. Dupuy understood a single word of this *Logic* of Condillac, which he recommended to us; it was a very thin volume, a small duodecimo. But I anticipate: this is a fault of mine, and when I re-read this, I shall perhaps have to strike out all these sentences which sin against chronological order.

The only man who was exactly in the right place was the Abbé Gattel, a well-dressed neat little man, always in the company of the ladies, a regular abbé of the seventeenth century; but he was very serious when he gave his lessons, and knew, I believe, all that was then known about the principal habits of those movements of in-

stinct, and, in the second place, of facility and analogy, followed by nations in forming their languages.

M. Gattel had made a very good dictionary, which I have always used, in which he had dared to mark the pronunciation. Finally, he was a man capable of working five or six hours a day, a rare thing in the provinces, where they can do nothing but fritter time away all day.

The idiots of Paris condemn this representation of a sound, natural pronunciation. This is out of cowardice and ignorance. They are afraid of being ridiculous if they note the pronunciation of words like *Anvers* (the town), *cours*, or *vers*. They do not know that at Grenoble, for instance, they pronounce the final *s* in all these words (*J'ai été au Cour-ce*; or: *J'ai lu des ver-ce sur Anver-se et Calai-se*). If they speak like this at Grenoble, a town with an intelligent society, and still have some affinity with the northern provinces, which have ousted the Midi, so far as language is concerned, what must it be at Toulouse, Béziers, Pézenas, Digne, districts in which the pronunciation of French ought to be posted up on the church doors?

A Minister of the Interior who wanted to do his duty, instead of intriguing about the King and in the Chambers, like M. Guizot, ought to demand a credit of two millions a year to bring up to the educational level of the rest of France those peoples who live within the fatal triangle between Bordeaux, Bayonne, and Valence. In these regions they believe in witchcraft, they cannot read, and they do not speak French. They may produce by chance a distinguished man like Lannes, or Scult, but General ⁽¹⁾ is incredibly ignorant. I think that, owing to the climate and love, and the energy with which it endows the human machine, this triangle ought to produce the first men in France. It is Corsica which leads me to this idea.

With its 180,000 inhabitants, this island gave eight or

¹ Name missing in original.

ten men of ability to the Revolution, while the Department of the Nord, with its 900,000 inhabitants, scarcely gave one. I cannot even recall the name of this *one*. Needless to say, the priests are all-powerful in this fatal triangle. Civilization stretches from Lille to Rennes, and leaves off about Orléans and Tours. To the south of Grenoble is its brilliant limit.

Appointing professors at the Central School did not cost much, and was soon done, but there were great repairs to be done to the buildings. In spite of the war, everything got done in those energetic days. My grandfather was constantly asking the departmental administration for funds.

Lectures began in the spring, I think, in temporary classrooms.

That of M. Durand had a delightful view, and at last, after a month, I became aware of it. It was a beautiful summer day, and a gentle breeze was stirring the meadow grass on the glacis of the Porte de Bonne, before our eyes, sixty or eighty feet below.

My relatives were constantly praising to me, in their peculiar way, the beauty of the fields, of green foliage, flowers, etc., buttercups, etc.

These commonplace phrases have given me a distaste for flowers and flower beds which still lasts.

Fortunately, the magnificent view which I discovered *all by myself*, from a window of the college next to the Latin classroom, where I used to go and dream all alone, conquered the deep distaste caused by the phrases of my father and his friends, the priests.

It is in the same way that, so many years later, the rhythmical, pretentious phrases of MM. Chateaubriand and de Salvandy made me write *Le Rouge et le Noir* in too jerky a style. It was a great folly, for in twenty years who will think of the hypocritical rigmaroles of these gentlemen? As for me, I am taking a ticket in a lottery in which the first prize amounts to this: to be read in 1935.

It was the same cast of mind which made me close my eyes to the landscapes over which my Aunt Séraphie went into ecstasies. I was in 1794 what the people of Milan are in 1835: the German authorities, whom they abhor, want to make them enjoy Schiller, whose noble spirit, so different from that of the commonplace Goethe, would be very shocked to see that his fame had won him such apostles.

It was a very strange thing for me to make my first appearance in the spring of 1794 or '95, at the age of eleven or twelve, in a school where I had ten or twelve schoolfellows.

I found that the reality fell far short of the wild dreams of my imagination. These companions of mine were not gay enough, not wild enough, and they had some very disgusting habits.

It seems to me that M. Durand, who was very puffed up at seeing himself a master in a Central School, but remained a good fellow, set me to translate Sallust, *De Bello Jugurthino*; liberty produced its first fruits; in losing my anger, I regained my common sense, and greatly enjoyed Sallust.

The whole college was full of workmen; many of the rooms on our third floor were open; I used to go and dream there alone.

Everything was a surprise in this liberty for which I had longed so much, and at which I had at last arrived. The charms I found in it were not those of which I had dreamed; I did not find the gay, charming, noble companions whom I had pictured to myself, but in their place some very selfish little rascals.

I have had this same disappointment throughout almost the whole course of my life. Only the pleasures of ambition were exempt from it, when, in 1810, I became an auditor and, a fortnight later, inspector of the Crown furniture. For three months I was intoxicated with contentment at no longer being a Commissary of War, ex-

posed to the envy and rough usage of those coarse heroes who were the Emperor's instruments at Jena and Wagram. Posterity will never know the coarseness and stupidity of these people, outside the field of battle. And even on the battlefield, what prudence! They were people like Admiral Nelson, the hero of Naples (see Caletta, and the stories told me by M. Di Fiore), like Nelson, thinking all the time of what every wound was worth to them in gratuities and crosses. What ignoble animals, compared with the high worth of General Michaud or Colonel Mathis! No, posterity will never know what groveling Jesuits these heroes of Napoleon's bulletins were, and how I used to laugh on receiving the *Moniteur* at Vienna, Dresden, Berlin, or Moscow. It was hardly sent to anybody in the army, for fear they should laugh at the messages. The bulletins were war machines, campaigning-works, and not historical documents.

Fortunately for poor Truth, the extreme cowardice of these heroes, when they became peers of France² and judges in 1835, will give posterity an insight into their heroism in 1809. I make exceptions only in the case of the amiable Lasalle, and Exelmans, who afterwards (³). But at that time he had not called upon Marshal Bournon, the Minister of War. There were certain meanesses that Moncey, too, would not have committed, but Suchet . . . ! I was forgetting the great Gouvion-Saint-Cyr, before old age had made him half imbecile; and this imbecility goes back to 1814. The only talent left him after this period was for writing. And among the civilians under Napoleon, what groveling creatures were M. de B. coming and badgering M. Daru at Saint-

² Peers of France: Stendhal's judgments on these generals are violently colored by his Napoleonic sympathies. For Sebastiani see p. 49. Gouvion St. Cyr was Minister for War under Louis XVIII and organized the armies which were victorious in Spain.

³ Gap in the original.

Cloud, in November, from seven o'clock in the morning, and the Comte d'Argout, the base flatterer of General Sebastiani!

But, good heavens, where have I got to? To the Latin school, in the college buildings.



CHAPTER XXIV

I did not get on very well with my companions; I see nowadays that I was at that time a most ridiculous mixture of pride and longing for amusement. I responded to their grasping selfishness with my ideas of Spanish nobility. I was heart-broken when they left me out of their games; to complete my wretchedness, I did not know these games. I brought to them a nobility of spirit and a delicacy which must have seemed to them utter folly. Cunning, and the prompt decision due to selfishness—a selfishness which I believe to be boundless—are the only qualities which have any success among children.

To complete my ill success, I was timid before the master; a mild reprimand casually administered by this pedantic little bourgeois, in a just tone, would bring tears to my eyes. These tears were cowardice in the eyes of the brothers Gauthier, Saint-Ferréol, I think, Robert (now director of the Théâtre Italien in Paris), and, above all, Odru. The last-named was a peasant, very strong and even more coarse, who was a foot taller than any of us, and whom we called Goliath; he was about as graceful as Goliath, but he used to give us shrewd knocks when his thick wits at last perceived that we were laughing at him.

His father was a rich peasant of Lumbin or some other village in the Valley (the name given *par excellence* to the fine valley of the Isère, from Grenoble to Montmélian. The valley really extends as far as the Dent de Moirans, like this).

My grandfather had taken advantage of Séraphie's departing this life to make me attend the classes in mathematics, chemistry, and drawing.

M. Dupuy, that pompous, comical bourgeois, was a sort of inferior rival of Dr. Gagnon in his importance in the life of the town. He would grovel before the nobility, but this advantage which he had over M. Gagnon was outweighed by a total absence of amiability and literary ideas, which were then the staple subject of conversation. M. Dupuy was jealous at seeing M. Gagnon a member of the organizing jury and his superior, and so did not welcome the influence exerted in my favor by his fortunate rival; and I gained my place in the mathematical classroom only by force of merit, and by seeing this merit continually called in question for three successive years. M. Dupuy, who talked incessantly (and never too much) about Condillac and his *Logic*, had not got a trace of logic in his head. He spoke nobly and with grace, and he had an imposing presence and very polished manners.

He had a very brilliant idea in 1794, which was to divide the hundred pupils who filled the ground-floor classroom at the first lesson in mathematics, into brigades of six or seven, each having its leader.

My leader was a "big boy"—I mean, a young man who had passed the age of puberty and was a foot taller than we were. He used to spit on us with his finger cunningly placed before his mouth. In the army such a character is called an *arsouille* [a "dirty dog"]. We complained of this *arsouille*, who was, I think, named Raimonet, to M. Dupuy, who degraded him with an admirably grand manner. M. Dupuy habitually served as a model to the young officers of artillery at Valence and had a keen sense of honor, in support of which he was ready to appeal to the sword.

We used the dull textbook by Bezout, but M. Dupuy had the good sense to talk to us about Clairaut and the

new edition of him recently prepared by M. Biot (that industrious charlatan).

Clairaut was calculated to sharpen the intelligence, which Bezout tended to leave permanently clogged. Every proposition, in Bezout, is like a great secret learned from the gossip next door.

In the drawing classroom I found that M. Jay, or M. Couturier, his assistant with the broken nose, was doing me a terrible injustice. But M. Jay, in the absence of all other merits, had that of a pompous delivery, which, instead of making us laugh, inspired us. M. Jay made a great success, an important matter for the Central School, which was attacked by the priests. He had two or three hundred pupils.

They were all distributed over forms holding seven or eight, and every day fresh forms had to be ordered. And what copies! Bad "academies" (studies from the nude) drawn by MM. Pajou and Jay himself; the legs, the arms—everything was an approximation to the truth, clumsy, very heavy, and very ugly. It was like the drawing of M. Moreau the younger, or of that M. Cachoud, who talks so amusingly about Michelangelo and Domenichino in his three little volumes on Italy.

The big heads were drawn in red chalk or engraved in imitation of chalk drawings. It must be confessed that in them the total ignorance of drawing was less apparent than in the "academies." The great merit of these heads, which were about eighteen inches high, was that the cross-hatchings were perfectly parallel; as for imitating nature, there was no question of that.

One Moulezin, as stupid and self-important as an ox, now a rich and important bourgeois of Grenoble and no doubt one of the most stubborn enemies of common sense, soon immortalized himself by the perfect parallelism of his red chalk cross-hatchings. He did "academies," and had been a pupil of M. Villonne (of Lyons); I, a pupil of M. Le Roy, whom illness and

Parisian good taste had prevented during his lifetime from being such a charlatan as M. Villonne of Lyons, a textile-designer—I could get only the big heads, which shocked me vastly but had the great advantage of being a lesson in modesty.

I was in great need of it, since I must speak plainly. My relations, whose product I was, used to congratulate themselves upon my talents in my presence, and I believed myself to be the most distinguished young man in Grenoble.

My inferiority in games to my companions in the Latin class began to open my eyes. The form for drawing the big heads, about H, where I was set down side by side with a shoemaker's two sons, with ridiculous faces (how unsuitable for the grandson of M. Gagnon!), inspired me with the will to do or die.

Such is the history of my talent for drawing: my family, judicious as ever, had decided, after I had had a year or eighteen months' lessons from the polite M. Le Roy, that I drew very well.

As a matter of fact, I was not even aware that drawing is an invention of nature. I would draw in black and white chalk a head in mezzorilievo. (I saw at Rome, in the Braccio Nuovo, that it was the head of Musa, the doctor of Augustus.) My drawing was neat, cold, and devoid of merit, like the drawing of a young lady at boarding-school.

My relations, who, for all their phrases about the beauties of the country and beautiful landscapes, had no feeling for the arts (there was not a single passable engraving in the house), declared that I was very good at drawing. M. Le Roy was still alive and painting landscapes in gouache (opaque color) less badly than the other things he did.

I obtained permission to give up drawing in pencil and paint in gouache.

M. Le Roy had painted a view of the bridge of La

Vence, between La Buisserate and Saint-Robert, taken from the point A.

I used to walk over this bridge several times a year on the way to Saint-Vincent; I considered that the drawing, especially the mountains at M, was very like the original. I was under a delusion. So then, it is necessary, first and foremost, that a drawing should resemble nature!

It was no longer a question of nice parallel cross-hatchings. After this fine discovery I made rapid progress.

Poor M. Le Roy went and died. I regretted him. However, I was still a slave then, and all the young men went to M. Villonne, a textile-designer, who had been driven out of "Commune-Affranchie" by war and the scaffold. Commune-Affranchie was the new name given to Lyons since its capture.

I infected my father (though by accident, and without having been clever enough to think of it) with my taste for gouache, and I bought of Mme Le Roy, for three times their value, many of her husband's studies in gouache.

I greatly coveted two volumes of La Fontaine's *Contes*, with engravings very delicately executed but very light in tone.

"They are shocking," said Mme Le Roy, with her fine, hypocritical eyes like those of a stage *soubrette*; "but they are masterpieces."

I saw that it was impossible to keep back the price of La Fontaine's *Contes* out of what I had for the gouache drawings. The Central School was opened. I no longer thought about painting in gouache, but my discovery remained with me: it was necessary to imitate nature; and that, perhaps, prevented my big heads, copied from those commonplace drawings, from being as execrable as they ought to have been. I remember Raphael's Indignant Soldier, from the *Expulsion of Heliodorus*; I never see the original (at the Vatican) without remembering my copy; the pencil technique, entirely arbitrary

and even false, was particularly brilliant in the dragon crest of the helmet.

When we had done a passable piece of work, M. Jay would sit down in the pupil's place, correct the head a little, and discuss it pompously—but still, he did discuss it—and finally sign the drawing on the back, apparently *ne varietur*, so that it might be sent up for competition in the middle or at the end of the year. He inspired me with enthusiasm, but had not the slightest notion of the Beautiful. He had painted only one poor picture in his life, a Liberty copied from his wife, short, stumpy, and formless. To lighten the effect, he had filled up the foreground with a tomb behind which the Liberty appeared hidden up to the knees.

The end of the year came round; examinations were held in the presence of a jury and, I think, of a member of the Department.

I obtained only a miserable “honorable mention,” and even that, I believe, only to please M. Gagnon, the chairman of the jury, and M. Dausse, another member of the jury and a great friend of M. Gagnon.

My grandfather was mortified at this, and told me so with perfect politeness and restraint. His simple words produced the greatest possible effect on me. He added, with a laugh: “All you could do was to show us your fat behind.”

This unprepossessing attitude had been noticed at the blackboard in the mathematical classroom.

It was a slate, six feet by four, supported at a height of five feet by a very solid frame; to reach it one went up three steps.

M. Dupuy made us prove a proposition—for instance, the square of the hypotenuse—or this problem: a piece of work costs seven *livres*, four *sous*, three *deniers* the *toise*; a workman has done two *toises*, five feet, three inches. How much is owing to him?

In the course of the year M. Dupuy had always called up to the blackboard M. de Monval, who was noble, M.

de Pina, noble and Ultra, M. Anglès, and M. de Renneville, a noble, but never once me.

The younger Monval, a dolt with a dolt's face but a good mathematician (as we said at school), was massacred by brigands in Calabria, about 1806, I think. The elder, who was with Paul-Louis Courier at the time of his capture, became a disgusting old Ultra. He was a colonel, and ruined a great lady at Naples in a contemptible fashion; at Grenoble he tried to blow hot and cold in 1830, but was discovered and generally despised. He died of this general contempt, which he richly deserved, but was highly praised by the priestly party (see the *Gazette* of 1832 or 1833). He was a good-looking man, and a rogue ready for any base action.

M. de P., mayor of Grenoble from 1825 to 1830. An Ultra who was ready for anything; forgetting probity for the benefit of his nine or ten children, he amassed an income of sixty thousand or seventy thousand francs. A gloomy fanatic and, I believe, a rogue who would do anything, a regular Jesuit.

Anglès, afterward prefect of police, was an indefatigable worker and a lover of order, but in politics a rogue, ready for anything; though, in my opinion, far less of a rogue than the former two, who stand first in my mind among the genus rogue.

The pretty Comtesse d'Anglès was a friend of the Comtesse Daru, in whose *salon* I saw her. The handsome Comte de Meffrey (of Grenoble, like M. Anglès) was her lover. The poor woman was terribly bored, as it seems to me, in spite of her husband's high office.

This husband, the son of a well-known miser, and a miser himself, was the most dismal brute, and had the poorest and most anti-mathematical intelligence. Moreover, he was scandalously cowardly; later on I will tell the story of his pigtail and his smack in the face. About 1826 or '29 he lost the prefecture of the police and went and built a fine country-house in the mountains near Roanne, where he died suddenly soon afterward, when

still young. He was a dismal brute; he had all the bad qualities of the Dauphiné character, base, cunning, tricky, and careful of the minutest details.

M. de Renneville was handsome, and as stupid as a block. His father was the dirtiest man, and the proudest, in Grenoble. I have never heard any more of him since our schooldays.

M. de Sinard, a promising pupil, who was reduced to beggary by the emigration, and protected and supported by M. de Vaulserre, was my friend.

We went up to the blackboard and wrote at O. The head of the demonstrator was a good eight feet from the ground. I was brought into prominence once a month, and in no way supported by M. Dupuy, who used to talk to Monval or M. de Pina while I made my demonstration; so I was full of shyness and used to stammer. When I went up to the blackboard in my turn, before the jury, my shyness was redoubled. I became confused as I looked at these gentlemen, especially the terrible M. Dausse, who was seated at the side, to the right of the blackboard. I had the presence of mind not to look at them, and to attend to nothing but what I was doing, and I got through it correctly, but bored them. How different from what happened in August 1799! I may justly say that it is by force of merit that I got on "at mathematics" and "at drawing," as we said at the Central School.

I was fat and not very tall, and I had a long light-gray coat—hence the reproach.

"Why have you not got a prize?" my grandfather said. "I have not had time!"

Classes had gone on this first year, I think, for only four or five months.

I went to Claix, still wildly enthusiastic about hunting, but as I scoured the fields, in spite of my father's wishes, I pondered deeply over the remark: "Why have you not got a prize?"

I cannot remember whether I went to the Central School for four years or only for three. I am sure of the date at which I left; the examination at the end of 1799, when the Russians were expected at Grenoble.¹

The aristocrats and my relations said, I think:

*"O Rus, quando ego te adspiciam!"*²

As for me, I trembled for the fate of the examination, which was to make me leave Grenoble! If I ever go back there, a little research in the archives of the departmental administration, at the prefecture, will tell me whether the Central School was opened in 1796 or only in 1797.

At that time we reckoned by the Republican calendar; it was the year V or VI. It was only long after, when the Emperor foolishly desired it, that I got to know 1796, 1797. I saw things at close quarters then.

The Emperor was then beginning to lay the foundations of the throne of the Bourbons, seconded by the unlimited cowardice of M. de Laplace.³ It is a singular thing; poets have a heart, but scholars, in the strict sense of the word, are servile and cowardly. How deep were the servility and baseness before the powers that be of M. Cuvier! It horrified even the wise Sutton Sharpe. At the Council of State, Baron Cuvier always held the most cowardly opinion.

¹ This was in the year 1799, during the War of the Second Coalition, when Suvorov was pressing the French hard in northern Italy and Switzerland.

² The original verse is *O rus*—(O country! when shall I behold thee?). By a play on words, Stendhal substitutes *Rus*, Russian, for *rus*, country.

³ Laplace: the great mathematician and astronomer, notorious for his tergiversations in politics. He was made Minister of the Interior by Napoleon, but proved incompetent, and was shortly superseded; he was rewarded with a title and many orders and decorations. At the Restoration he deserted the cause of Napoleon and received a marquise.

At the time of the creation of the Order of Reunion,⁴ I was in the most intimate circles at Court; he came and wept—that is the right word—to get it. I will relate in its right place the Emperor's answer. Among those who got on by cowardice were: Bacon, Laplace, Cuvier. M. Lagrange was less groveling, it seems to me.

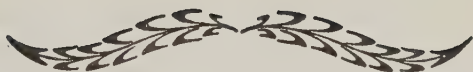
Assured of fame by their writings, these gentlemen hope that the savant will hide the statesman; in money matters, as is well known, they run after advantage. The famous Legendre, a geometer of the highest order, on receiving the cross of the Legion of Honor, fastened it onto his coat, looked in the looking-glass, and jumped for joy.

The room was low, his head struck the ceiling, and he fell, half stunned. What a worthy death this would have been for a successor of Archimedes!

What base things were done at the Academy of Sciences, from 1825 to 1830 and afterward, in order to get hold of a cross! It was incredible. I heard the details from MM. de Jussieu, Edwards, Milne-Edwards, and in the *salon* of Baron Gérard. I cannot remember all these dirty tricks.

A Maupeou, who says openly: "I will do all that is necessary to get on," is less base.

⁴ Created by Napoleon in 1811 to commemorate the reunion of Holland with France. It was abolished in 1815.



CHAPTER XXV

My spirit, delivered from tyranny, began to gain some energy. Little by little I was less constantly obsessed by that nerve-racking sentiment, impotent hatred.

My good Aunt Elisabeth was my providence. She went almost every evening to have her game of cards with Mmes Colomb or Romagnier. These excellent sisters had nothing bourgeois about them but certain prudent fads and certain habits. They had a noble spirit, such a rare thing in the provinces, and were tenderly attached to my Aunt Elisabeth.

I cannot speak highly enough of these good cousins; they had great, generous souls; they had given signal proofs of this in the great occasions of their lives.

My father, more and more absorbed by his passion for agriculture and Claix, passed three or four days a week there. M. Gagnon's house, where he had dined and supped every day since the death of my mother, was no longer so pleasant to him, by far. He could speak quite freely only to Séraphie. My Aunt Elisabeth's Spanish sentiments abashed him; there was never much conversation between them. The petty cunning of Dauphiné, displayed at every instant, and the displeasing timidity of the one sorted ill with the noble sincerity and simplicity of the other. Mlle Gagnon had no liking for my father, who, on the other hand, was not capable of keeping up a conversation with Dr. Gagnon; he was respectful and polite, M. Gagnon was very polite, and that was all. So my father sacrificed nothing by going and passing three or four days a week at Claix. He said

to me two or three times, when he forced me to accompany him to Claix, that it was sad, at his age, to have no home of his own.

On coming home in the evening to sup with my Aunt Elisabeth, my grandfather, and my two sisters, I did not have to fear a very severe cross-questioning. In general, I said with a laugh that I had been to call for my aunt at the house of Mmes Romagnier or Colomb; often, in fact, I would escort her from these ladies' houses to the door of her apartments, and would then run downstairs again so as to go and spend half an hour on the promenade in the public gardens, which in summer, by moonlight, beneath the magnificent chestnuts eighty feet high, served as a rendezvous for all that was young and brilliant in the town.

By degrees I grew bolder; I went more often to the theater, always standing in the parterre.

I felt a tender interest in looking at a young actress named Mlle Kably. Soon I was madly in love with her; I never spoke to her.

She was a young woman, slight and fairly tall, with an aquiline nose, pretty, slender, and with a good figure. She had still the thinness of her first youth, but her face was grave and often melancholy.

Everything was new to me in the strange folly which had suddenly become master of my thoughts. Every other interest disappeared for me. I hardly recognized the sentiment of which the description had charmed me in the *Nouvelle Héloïse*; still less was it the sensuous pleasure of *Félicia*. I suddenly became indifferent and just to all that surrounded me; at this period my hatred for my late Aunt Séraphie died.

Mlle Kably played the rôle of the *jeune première* in comedy; she also sang in light opera.

It can easily be felt that true comedy was not for me. My grandfather constantly dinned into my ears that great saying: "*the knowledge of the human heart.*" But

what could I know of the human heart? A few glimpses at most, caught up from books, and particularly from *Don Quixote*, perhaps the only book which did not inspire me with mistrust; all the others had been recommended to me by my aunts, for my grandfather (a recent convert, I think) abstained from making jests about the books which my father and Séraphie made me read.

What I needed, then, was romantic comedy—I mean to say, drama of a not very gloomy kind, representing the troubles of love, not of money (I have always had a horror of the gloomy, dismal drama based on lack of money, as being bourgeois and too true to life).

Mlle Kably shone in Florian's *Claudine*: a young woman of Savoy who has had a child, at Le Montanvert, by a fashionable young traveler, dresses herself as a man and, followed by her little brat, finds employment as a road-sweeper in a square in Turin. She finds her lover, whom she still loves, and becomes his manservant; but this lover is about to be married.

The actor who played the lover, named Poussi, as it seems to me—this name suddenly comes back to me after all these years—used to say: "Claude! Claude!" in the most perfectly natural way, at a certain point when he was scolding his servant, who was speaking ill of his future bride. The tone of his voice still rings in my ears; I can see the actors.

For many months this work, which was often asked for by the public, gave me the keenest pleasure—I would say the keenest that has ever been given me by a work of art, had not my pleasure consisted, for a long time past, in the tenderest, most devoted, and wildest admiration.

I did not dare to pronounce the name of Mlle Kably; if anyone spoke her name in my presence, I felt a curious movement near to my heart; I was on the point of falling down. A tempest raged, as it were, in my blood.

If anybody said "*la Kably*" instead of "Mademoiselle Kably," I felt a sentiment of hatred and of horror which I was scarcely strong enough to master.

She used to sing, in her poor, weak little voice, in *Le Traité nul*, an opera by Gaveau, a weak-headed man who died mad a few years later.

Here began my love for music, which has perhaps been my strongest and most expensive passion; it still lasts, at the age of fifty, and is keener than ever. I do not know how many miles I would not walk on foot, or how many days' imprisonment I would not endure, to hear *Don Juan* or the *Matrimonio Segreto*, and I do not know anything else for which I would make this effort. But, unfortunately for me, I loathe *mediocre* music (in my eyes it is a satirical pamphlet against good music); for instance, Donizetti's *Furioso*, yesterday in Rome, at the Teatro Valle. The Italians, unlike me, cannot bear music that is more than five or six years old. One of them said before me at Mme X's house: "Can music be fine that is more than a year old?"

What a parenthesis, great God! When I re-read this, I shall have to strike out half this manuscript or arrange it in a different way.

I learned by heart—and with what transports of ecstasy!—that continuous, jerky trickle of vinegar which was called *Le Traité nul*.

A fairly good actor who played gaily the rôle of the valet (I can see today that he had the true lightheartedness of a poor devil who has nothing but sad thoughts at home and gladly surrenders himself to his rôle) gave me my first ideas of the comic, especially at the moment when he arranges the quadrille which finishes with "*Mathurine was listening*."

I had bought from M. Le Roy a landscape in which there was much gum resin, reinforced with bistre, especially in the foreground to the left. I was copying it, at that time, with delight, and it seemed to me to be absolutely the same thing as the acting of this comic actor,

who made me laugh heartily when Mlle Kably was not on the stage. If he addressed her, I was touched and enchanted. Hence it comes perhaps that even nowadays a picture or a piece of music often gives me the same sensation. How many times have I discovered this identity in the Brera Museum at Milan (1814-1812)!

All this has a truth and a force for me which I find it hard to explain, and which would, moreover, be believed with difficulty.

The marriage, the intimate union between these two fine arts, was cemented forever, when I was twelve or thirteen years old, by four or five months of the acutest happiness, and the strongest sensation of sensuous pleasure, going almost to the verge of pain, that I have ever experienced.

At present I see (but I see it in Rome at fifty-two) that I had a taste for music even before this lilting *Traité nul*, which was so like a trickle of vinegar, so French, but which I still know by heart. Here are my memories: (1) The sound of the bells of Saint-André, especially when they were rung for the elections, one year when my cousin, Abraham Mallein (the father of my brother-in-law, Alexander), was president, or else simply an elector. (2) The sound of the pump in the Place Grenette, when the maidservants, at night, used to pump with the great iron bar. (3) Last, but least of all, the sound of a flute played by some merchant's clerk on a fourth story on the Place Grenette.

These things had already given me pleasures, which, though I did not know it, were musical pleasures.

Mlle Kably also acted in Grétry's *Epreuve villageoise*, which was far less bad than the *Traité nul*. In *Raoul, Sire de Créqui* a tragic situation made me tremble; in short, all the little operas of 1794 were raised to the level of the sublime for me by the presence of Mlle Kably; the moment she appeared, nothing could be common or undistinguished.

I had one day the extreme courage to ask someone where Mlle Kably lodged. This was probably the bravest action of my life.

"In the rue des Clercs," they replied.

I had had the courage, long before this, to ask whether she had a lover, which the person I asked had answered by some coarse proverb; he knew nothing of her way of life.

I used to pass along the rue des Clercs on my very brave days: my heart was beating, I should perhaps have fallen to the ground if I had met her; I was saved when I arrived at the lower end of the rue des Clercs and was sure of not meeting her.

One morning, as I was walking alone at the end of the great chestnut avenue in the public gardens, and thinking, as always, of her, I saw her at the other end of the garden, against the wall of the Intendance, coming toward the terrace. I almost fainted, and finally took to my heels, as if the devil were after me, along the railing, by the line F; she was, I think, at K. I was lucky enough not to be seen by her. Observe that she did not know me in the least. This is one of the most marked features of my character, as I have always been (even the day before yesterday). The happiness of seeing her at close quarters, at a distance of five or six feet, was too great; it scorched me, and I fled from this scorching, which was a very real pain.

This peculiarity would make me rather inclined to believe that, in love, I have the melancholy temperament described by Cabanis.

Indeed, love has always been to me the greatest of all affairs, or, rather, the only one. I have never feared anything except to see the woman I love look in an intimate way at a rival. I have hardly any anger against the rival: "He is pursuing his object," I think, but my suffering is poignant and knows no bounds; it reaches such a pitch that I feel the need to sink down on a stone bench at the door of the house. I admire everything in a rival

who is preferred to me (Major Gibory and Mme Martin, Palazzo Aguissola, Milan).

No other grief produces the thousandth part of this effect on me.

When I was about the person of the Emperor, I was attentive, zealous, and never thinking about my tie, in which I was very different from the others. (Example, one evening at seven o'clock at — in Lusatia, campaign of 1813, the day after the death of the Duke of Friuli.)

I am neither timid nor melancholy when I am writing, and exposing myself to the risk of being hissed; I feel full of courage and pride when I write a phrase which would be rejected by one of those two giants (of 1835): MM. de Chateaubriand or Villemain.

No doubt in 1880 there will be some clever, prudent, fashionable charlatan, like these gentlemen today. But if people read this, I shall be thought envious, and that distresses me; that despicable bourgeois vice is, it seems to me, more foreign to my character than any other.

In reality, I am mortally jealous of those who make love to a woman whom I love; what is more, I am even jealous of those who made love to her ten years before me. (For instance, Babet's first lover, at Vienna, in 1809:

"You used to receive him in your bedroom!")

"Every room was a bedroom to us; we were alone in the castle and he had the keys."

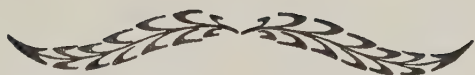
I still feel the pain which these words gave me, and yet it was in 1809, twenty-seven years ago; I can see the perfect simplicity of pretty Babet; she was looking at me.)

No doubt I have found great pleasure in writing for the last hour, and trying to give a perfectly true picture of my sensations at the time of Mlle Kably; but who the devil will have the heart to read this excessive accumulation of *I's* and *me's*? Even to myself, it smells to heaven. That is the fault of this kind of writing, and, moreover,

I cannot spice its insipidity by a sauce of charlatanism. Dare I add: "like the confessions of Rousseau"? No; in spite of the enormous absurdity of the charge, people will again think me envious, or, rather, that I am trying to establish a comparison, appalling in its absurdity, with the masterpiece of that great writer.

I protest yet again, and once for all, that I supremely despise M. Pariset, M. de Salvandy, M. Saint-Marc Girardin, and the other swashbucklers, hired pedants, and Jesuits of the *Journal des Débats*, but I do not for all this consider myself any nearer to the great writers. I do not attribute to myself any guarantee of merit except that of painting a *real likeness* of nature, which appears to me so clearly at certain moments.

Secondly, I am sure of my perfect good faith and of my adoration for the truth; thirdly, too, of the pleasure which I take in writing, a pleasure which reached the verge of distraction in 1817, at Milan, in the house of M. Peroult, in the Corsia del Giardino.



CHAPTER XXVI

But let us return to Mlle Kably. How far I was from envy and from dreaming that the *imputation of envy* was to be feared, and of thinking about others in any way whatsoever, in those days! Life was beginning for me.

There was only one being in the world: Mlle Kably; only one event: was she to act that night or the next?

What a disappointment when she was not playing, and they gave some tragedy!

What a transport of pure, tender, triumphant joy when I read her name on the poster! I can see it still, that poster—its shape, its paper, and its lettering.

I went and read the beloved name in three or four places where notices were posted, one after the other: at the door of the Jacobins, at the archway of the Gardens, at the corner of my grandfather's house. I not only read her name, I gave myself the pleasure of re-reading the whole bill. The rather worn-out letters of the bad printer who produced this bill became dear and sacred to me, and for many a long year I loved them better than any finer ones.

I even remember this: when I arrived in Paris, in November 1799, the beauty of the lettering shocked me; it was not that in which the name of Kably had been printed.

She went away, at what period I cannot say. For a long time I could not go to the theater any more. I got permission to learn music, but not without difficulty: my father's religion was shocked by such a profane art, and my grandfather had not the smallest taste for it.

I went to a violin master named Mention, the most amusing man; the old French gaiety was mingled in him with bravery and love. He was very poor, but he had the heart of an artist; one day when I was playing worse than usual, he shut the book, saying: "I will not continue the lessons."

I went to a clarinet master named Hoffman (rue de Bonne), a worthy German; I played that instrument a little less badly. I do not know how I came to leave this master and go on to M. Holleville, rue Saint-Louis, opposite Mme Barthélemy, our shoemaker. He was a very fair violinist, deaf, but noticing the slightest false note. There I used to meet M. Félix Faure (nowadays a Peer of France and First President of the Courts, who gave judgment in August 1835). I do not know how I came to leave Holleville.

Finally I went and took lessons in vocal music at six o'clock in the morning, unknown to my relations, in the Place Saint-Louis, from a very poor singer.

But it was no use; I was the first to be horrified at the sounds I produced. I bought some Italian airs, one, among others, which I read as *Amore*, or something, *nello cimento*; which I understood to mean "in the cement, in the mortar." I adored these Italian airs, which I did not understand in the least. I had started too late. If anything could have given me a dislike for music, it would have been the execrable sounds which one is bound to produce in order to learn. The piano alone might have enabled me to get round this difficulty, but I was born of an essentially inharmonious family.

When, in later days, I wrote about music, my friends based their chief criticism on this ignorance of mine. But I must say, without any affectation, that at the same time I felt in the piece that was being executed shades of expression which they did not perceive. The same is true of shades of expression of faces in copies of the same picture. I see these things as clearly as through glass. But, great God! I shall be thought an idiot!

When I came back to life after some months of Mlle Kably's absence, I found myself a different man.

I no longer hated Séraphie; I had forgotten her. As for my father, I desired only one thing: not to be in his presence. I observed, with remorse, that I had not an atom of tenderness or affection for him.

"I must be a monster, then," I said to myself. And for long years I found no answer to this reproach. In my family they talked incessantly and *ad nauseam* about affection. These good people gave the name of affection to the continuous vexation with which they had honored me for five or six years past. I began to perceive dimly that they were desperately bored, but that since they had too much vanity to resume the social relations which they had imprudently abandoned at the time of their cruel loss, I was their resource against boredom.

But nothing could move me any more after what I had just experienced. I studied hard at Latin and drawing, and I gained a first prize, I cannot say in which of these two classes, and a second. I took pleasure in translating the *Life of Agricola* of Tacitus; it was almost the first time that Latin caused me any pleasure. This pleasure was disagreeably disturbed by the boxes on the ear given me by Odru, the big boy, a great, ignorant peasant of Lumbin, who studied with us, but understood nothing about anything. I fought hard with Giroud, who had a red coat. I was still a child during the greater half of my existence.

And yet the moral tempest to which I had been a prey for several months had matured me, and I began to say to myself seriously: "I must make up my mind and get out of this slough."

I had only one means in the world: mathematics. But they were taught me so stupidly that I made no progress; it is true that my companions made even less, if possible. The great M. Dupuy expounded the propositions to us as if they had been a series of recipes for making vinegar.

However, Bezout was my only resource if I wanted to get away from Grenoble. But Bezout was so stupid! He had a head like that of M. Dupuy, our pompous professor.

My grandfather knew a bourgeois of narrow intelligence, named Chabert, who "gave demonstrations of mathematics in chambers." That was the local expression, which exactly suited the man. With considerable trouble I got permission to go to M. Chabert's chambers; they were afraid of offending M. Dupuy, and, besides, it seems to me that they had to pay twelve francs a month.

I replied that most of the pupils in the mathematics class at the Central School went to M. Chabert, and that if I did not go there, I should remain at the bottom of the school. So I went to M. Chabert. M. Chabert was a bourgeois who was rather badly dressed, but always looked as if he were in his Sunday clothes and terrified of spoiling his coat and waistcoat and his nice cashmere breeches of gosling green; he had also a rather nice-looking bourgeois face. He lodged in the rue Neuve, near the rue Saint-Jacques, and almost opposite Bourbon, the iron-merchant, whose name struck me, for this name was never pronounced by my bourgeois relations without signs of the deepest respect and truest devotion. One would have thought that the life of France depended upon it.

But I found with M. Chabert the same absence of favor as that which crushed me at the Central School and was the reason why I was never called to the blackboard. In a little room, among seven or eight pupils grouped round a blackboard of oilcloth, nothing was more awkward than to ask to go up to the blackboard and explain for the fifth or sixth time a proposition which four or five pupils had already explained. It was this, however, that I was sometimes forced to do at M. Chabert's, or else I should never have "demonstrated." M. Chabert considered me a *minus habens*, and con-

tinued to hold this abominable opinion. Nothing was funnier, later on, than to hear him talk of my successes in mathematics.

But at this early stage it was extraordinarily negligent and, to speak more justly, lacking in intelligence on the part of my relations not to ask whether I was competent to "demonstrate" and how many times in the week I went to the blackboard; they did not descend to these details. M. Chabert, who professed to have a great respect for M. Dupuy, hardly ever called up to the blackboard any but those who were called up at the Central School. There was a certain M. de Renneville, whom M. Dupuy called up because he was noble and a cousin of the Monvals; he was a sort of idiot, almost dumb and with goggle eyes; I was so shocked that I could hardly contain myself when I saw M. Dupuy and M. Chabert prefer him to me.

I can excuse M. Chabert; I must have been the most presumptuous, disdainful little boy. My grandfather and my family proclaimed me to be a marvel: had they not for five years given me their whole attention?

M. Chabert was, in fact, less ignorant than M. Dupuy. I found in his rooms Euler and his problems about the eggs which a peasant woman was carrying to market when a bad man stole a fifth of them; then she leaves behind a full half of the rest, etc.

This aroused my intelligence; I began to see what it meant to make use of the instrument named algebra. The devil take me if anyone had ever told me. M. Dupuy was constantly making pompous phrases on this subject, but never this simple remark: it is a *division of labor*, which works wonders, like all division of labor, and allows the mind to concentrate all its forces on a single side of things, on a single one of their qualities.

What a difference it would have made to us if M. Dupuy had said to us: this cheese is soft or it is hard; it is white, it is blue; it is old, it is new; it is mine, it is yours; it is light or it is heavy. Of all these qualities, we

are considering absolutely none but the weight. Whatever this weight may be, let us call it A. Now, without thinking any more about the cheese itself, let us apply to A all that we know about quantities. In that remote province we were never told a simple thing like that; since those days the *École polytechnique*¹ and the ideas of Lagrange² must have produced some effect in the provinces.

The finest product of the education of those days was a little sneak dressed in green, gentle, hypocritical, and nice, and three feet tall, who used to learn by heart the propositions which we had to prove, without caring in the least whether he understood them. This favorite of M. Chabert's as well as of M. Dupuy's was called, if I am not mistaken, Paul-Émile Teisseire. The examiner for the *École polytechnique*, a brother of the great geometer, who wrote that famous nonsense (at the beginning of the *Statics*), did not perceive that Paul-Émile's sole merit was an amazing memory.

He arrived at the *École*; his perfect hypocrisy, his memory, and his pretty girl's-face did not have the same success as at Grenoble; he did pass out as an officer, but was soon moved by grace, and became a priest. Unfortunately he died of consumption. I had followed his fortunes with pleasure. I had left Grenoble with an inordinate longing that I might one day be able to box his ears to my heart's content.

It seems to me that I had already given him some on account at M. Chabert's, where he justly surpassed me by his imperturbable memory.

As for him, he was never angry at anything and

¹The *École polytechnique* was first founded in 1794 by the National Convention to train young men for the army, engineering, and public works. It is now under the Ministry of War and gives a technical training to young men entering the public services.

²Lagrange: one of the group of brilliant mathematicians who, with Monge, lectured at the *École polytechnique* when it was first founded.

passed with perfect self-possession through the volleys of "little hypocrite" which reached him on every side; they were redoubled one day when we saw him, crowned with roses, playing the part of an angel in a procession.

He was about the only character whom I noticed at the Central School. He made a fine contrast with the gloomy Benoît, whom I met at M. Dubois-Fontanelle's literature lectures, and who held that august learning consisted in Socratic love, which Dr. Clapier, that madman, had taught him.

It is perhaps ten years since I thought about M. Chabert; I gradually recall that he was really much less narrow than M. Dupuy, although his way of speaking was even more drawling and his appearance much more shabby and bourgeois.

He thought highly of Clairaut, and it was an enormous thing to put us into contact with this man of genius; we got away from the commonplace Bezout a little. He had Bruce and the Abbé Marie, and from time to time he gave us a theorem from one of these authors to study. He had even a few small things of Lagrange in manuscript, things of a kind suited to our small capacity.

It seems to me that we used to work with pen and ink in an exercise book, and at a blackboard of oilcloth.

My disfavor extended to everything; perhaps it was due to some blunder on the part of my relations, who had forgotten to send a Christmas turkey to M. Chabert or his sisters, for he had some very pretty ones, and if it had not been for my shyness I should certainly have paid attentions to them. They were full of respect for the grandson of M. Gagnon and used, moreover, to come to Mass at our house on Sunday.

We went out making plans with the graphometer and the plane table; one day we surveyed a field beside the Chemin des Boiteuses. It was the field BCDE. M. Chabert made all the others draw the lines on the plane table; finally my turn came, but I was the last or the

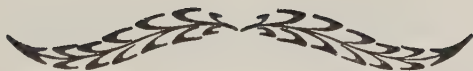
last but one, before a child. I was humiliated and annoyed. I bore too hard on the pen.

"But it was a line I told you to draw," said M. Chabert with his drawling accent, "and you have made a bar."

He was right. I think that my state of marked disfavor with MM. Dupuy and Chabert and of marked indifference from M. Jay, at the drawing-school, prevented me from becoming a fool. I had amazing tendencies that way; my relations, who were always inveighing with bigoted moroseness against public education, had convinced themselves with little difficulty that by their five years of assiduous care—alas! all too assiduous—they had produced a masterpiece, and this masterpiece was myself.

One day I said to myself—but, it is true, this was before the Central School: "May I not be the son of a great prince, and all that I hear about the Revolution, and the little that I see of it, a fable intended for my education, as in *Émile*?"

For my grandfather, a man of pleasant conversation in spite of his pious resolutions, had mentioned *Émile* before me, and talked of the *Profession de foi du vicaire savoyard*. I had stolen this book from Claix, but had not understood any of it, not even the absurdities of the first page, and after a quarter of an hour I had laid it aside. I must do this justice to my father's taste, that he was an enthusiast for Rousseau and talked of him sometimes, for which, and for his imprudence in speaking of him before a child, he was well scolded by my Aunt Séraphie.



CHAPTER XXVII

I had, and I have still, the most aristocratic tastes; I would do anything for the happiness of the people, but I would rather, I think, pass a fortnight out of every month in prison than live with those who dwell in shops.

About that time—I do not know how it came about—I became friendly with François Bigillion (who has since killed himself, I think because he was so bored with his wife).

He was a simple, natural, sincere man, who never tried to give one to understand by a pretentious answer that he knew the world, or women, etc. At college that was our great ambition and our principal form of fa-tuity. Each of these hobbledehoys wanted to make the others believe that he had possessed women and knew the world; there was nothing of this sort about the good Bigillion. We used to go for long walks together, particularly in the direction of the Tour de Rabot and the Bastille. The magnificent view which one enjoys from there, especially in the direction of Eybens, behind which appear the high Alps, used to give us a sense of exaltation. Rabot and the Bastille—the former an old tower and the latter a little house—are situated at two quite different levels on the mountain which shuts in the town wall, a ridiculous affair in 1795 but improved in 1836.

During these walks we used to confide to each other, with perfect frankness, all our ideas about that terrible, dark, delightful forest which we were on the point of

entering. It is clear that I am referring to society and the world.

Bigillion had great advantages over me:

1. He had lived in freedom since his childhood, being the son of a father who was not very fond of him, and knew how to find other means of amusement than treating his son like a doll.

2. This father, a bourgeois countryman in easy circumstances, lived at Saint-Ismier, a village lying near one of the gates of Grenoble, to the east, in a charming position in the valley of the Isère. This worthy countryman, a lover of wine, good food, and pretty peasant girls, had taken a little apartment in Grenoble for his two sons, who were being educated there. The elder was called Bigillion, according to the custom of our province; the younger, Rémy, was a humorist, a curious fellow of the true Dauphiné type, only generous, and a little jealous, even then, of the friendship which Bigillion and I had for each other.

This friendship, founded upon perfect mutual confidence, had become intimate by the end of a fortnight. He had an uncle who was a learned monk, and, as it seems to me, not very monkish, the good Father Morlon, a Benedictine perhaps, who had been kind enough, out of friendship for my grandfather, to hear my confession once or twice when I was a child. I had been much surprised at his gentle, polite tone, so different from the harsh pedantry of the embittered pedagogues, like the Abbé Rambault, to whom my father usually handed me over.

This good Father Morlon had a great influence over my mind; he had Letourneur's translation of Shakespeare, and his nephew Bigillion borrowed for me, one after another, all the volumes of this work, which was a considerable affair for a child, eighteen or twenty volumes.

As I read it I felt that I was being born again. In the

first place, it had the immense advantage of not having been praised and preached about by my relatives, as Racine had been. They had only to praise anything *connected with pleasure* to give me a horror of it.

That nothing should be lacking to the power of Shakespeare over my heart, I even believe that my father had spoken ill of him.

I distrusted my family in everything; but where the fine arts were concerned, their praise was enough to give me a supreme distaste for the finest things. My heart, which was greatly in advance of my intelligence, felt keenly that they were praising them as kings nowadays praise religion—I mean to say, with ulterior motives. I felt confusedly, but very vividly, and with a fire that I no longer possess, that all beauty of a moral order—beauty, that is to say, which is a question of interest on the part of the artist—kills every work of art. I read Shakespeare continually from 1796 to 1799. Racine, who was forever being praised by my relations, produced on me the impression of a base hypocrite. My grandfather had told me the anecdote of how he died because Louis XIV had ceased to look at him. Moreover, verse bored me, because it prolonged the phrase and made it lose its precision. I abhorred “courser” instead of “horse.” I called it hypocrisy.

Living in isolation in the bosom of a family who spoke very well, how could I be sensitive to a greater or less degree of nobility of language? How could I have learned inelegant language?

Corneille was less displeasing to me. The writers who filled me with wild delight at that time were Cervantes, Don Quixote, and Ariosto (all three translated), in translations.¹ Immediately after them came Rousseau, who had the double drawback of praising priests and being praised by my father. I read with delight the

¹ This sentence represents a lapse on Stendhal's part. He undoubtedly meant to name Cervantes, Shakespeare, and Ariosto.

Contes of La Fontaine and *Félicia*. But these were not *literary pleasures*. They were books of the kind that one only reads with one hand, as Duclos used to say.

When in 1824, at the moment when I fell in love with Clémentine, I was endeavoring not to let my soul be completely absorbed in the contemplation of her graces (I remember a great struggle one evening, at M. du Bignon's concert, at which I was sitting beside the famous General Foy; Clémentine, who was an Ultra, did not go to that house), when, I say, I wrote *Racine et Shakespeare*, I was accused of posing, and of disowning my first childhood's impressions; but you can see the truth of what I was careful not to say (as it would have been considered incredible)—namely, that my first love had been for Shakespeare, and, among other things, for *Hamlet* and *Romeo and Juliet*.

The Bigillions lived in the rue Chenoise (I am not sure of the name), the street which came out between the arch of Notre-Dame and a little river on which was built a convent of the Augustinians. There was a famous secondhand-book shop there, which I often visited. Beyond this was the oratory where my father had been imprisoned for a few days with M. Colomb, the father of Romain Colomb, my oldest friend (in 1836).

In this apartment on the third floor there lived with the Bigillions their sister, Mlle Victorine Bigillion, very simple and very pretty, but by no means of a Grecian style of beauty; on the contrary, she had a face which was essentially Allobrogian in type. It seems to me that nowadays this is called the Gallic race (see Dr. Edwards or M. Antoine de Jussieu; it is the latter, at any rate, who made me believe in this classification).

Mlle Victorine was intelligent and thought a great deal; she was the incarnation of all that was blooming. Her face was in perfect harmony with the cross-barred windows of the apartment which she occupied with her two brothers, a gloomy place, although it was on the

third floor and looked south; but the house opposite was enormous. This perfect harmony struck me, or, rather, I felt the effect of it, but I could not understand it at all.

I was often there while the two boys and their sister ate their supper. A maidservant from their part of the country, as simple as they were, used to prepare it for them; they used to eat brown bread, which seemed incomprehensible to me, for I had never eaten anything but white.

That was the only advantage I had over them; in their eyes, I belonged to a higher class in society: the grandson of M. Gagnon, a member of the jury of the Central School, was *noble*, and they bourgeois, verging on the peasant class. Not that they had any regrets or stupid admiration; for instance, they preferred brown bread to white, and they could perfectly well have had their flour bolted if they wanted white bread.

We lived there in perfect innocence, around the walnut table covered with an unbleached linen tablecloth; Bigillion, the elder brother, aged fourteen or fifteen, Rémy twelve, Mlle Victorine thirteen, myself thirteen, and the servant seventeen.

We were a very young party, as you can see, with no grown-up relation to make us uncomfortable. When their father, M. Bigillion, came to town for a day or two, we did not dare to wish him away, but he made us ill at ease.

Perhaps, though, we were all a year older than this, but that at the outside; my two last years, 1799 and 1798, were entirely absorbed by mathematics, with Paris at the end; so it was 1797, then, or rather 1796; now, in 1796 I was thirteen years old.

We lived, then, like young rabbits nibbling thyme while they play in a wood. Mlle Victorine was the house-keeper; she used to have bunches of dried grapes which she kept in a vine leaf tied up with a piece of thread; she used to give them to me, and I was almost as fond

of them as I was of her charming face. I would sometimes ask for a second bunch, and she would often refuse, saying: "We have only got eight left, and they must last till the end of the week."

Once or twice every week the provisions would come from Saint-Ismier. That is the custom at Grenoble. Every bourgeois has a passion for his demesne, and he prefers a salad coming from his demesne at Montbonnot, Saint-Ismier, Corenc, Voreppe, Saint-Vincent or Claix, Echerolles, Eybens, Domène, etc., which costs him four *sous*, to the same salad bought for two *sous* in the Place aux Herbes. This bourgeois had ten thousand francs invested at five per cent with the Périers (the father and cousin of Casimir, who was Minister in 1832); he invests them in a demesne which brings him in two or two and a half per cent, and he is delighted. I think the profit he receives is in the form of vanity and the pleasure of saying with an air of self-importance: "I have got to go to Montbonnot," or: "I have just come from Montbonnot."

I was not in love with Victorine; my heart was still all bleeding from the departure of Mlle Kably, and my friendship for Bigillion was so intimate that I had gone so far, it seems to me, as to confide my mad passion to him, but briefly, for fear of his laughter.

He had not been at all startled; he was the best and simplest of creatures, and these precious qualities were united to the finest good sense. This good sense was characteristic of the family and was strengthened in him by the conversation of Rémy, his brother and intimate friend, who was not very impressionable, but even more relentlessly sensible than Bigillion. Rémy would often pass whole afternoons without opening his lips.

On this third story I passed the happiest moments of my life. Shortly afterward the Bigillions left this house and went to live at the approach to the Pont-de-Bois; or else it was the other way, and they came from the Pont-de-Bois to the rue Chenoise, as it seems to me; it was certainly the street into which the rue du Pont Saint-

Jaime leads. I am sure about those three sash-windows, at B, and of their position in relation to the rue du Pont Saint-Jaime. I am making more discoveries than ever as I write this (at Rome, in January 1836). I have three quarters forgotten these things, about which I have not thought six times a year for the last twenty years.

I was very shy with Victorine, whose young bust I admired; but I used to confide everything to her—for instance, the persecutions of Séraphie, from which I was only just beginning to escape; and I remember that she refused to believe me, which hurt me cruelly. She gave me to understand that I had an evil character.



CHAPTER XXVIII

The severe Rémy would have been very ill-pleased if I had paid attentions to his sister; Bigillion gave me to understand this, and it was the only point upon which there was not complete frankness between us. Often, about nightfall, after our walk, when I made as if to go up and see Victorine, I received a hasty "Good-by," which vexed me greatly. I had need of friendship and frank speech, my heart was rankling with all the unkindnesses of which, rightly or wrongly, I firmly believed I had been the object.

I must confess, however, that I far preferred having this perfectly simple conversation with Victorine to having it with her brothers. I can see nowadays what were my feelings then: I could hardly believe that I was seeing at such close quarters that terrible animal, a woman; one, too, with magnificent hair, an arm divinely shaped, though a little thin, and, finally, a charming bust, which was often a little uncovered, owing to the extreme heat. It is true that, sitting by the walnut table, two feet away from Mlle Bigillion, with the corner of the table between us, I talked to the brothers only out of virtue. But, for all that, I had no desire to fall in love; I was *scolato* (burned, scalded), as they say in Italian. I had just found by experience that love was a serious and terrible thing; I did not say it to myself, but I felt perfectly well that, on the whole, my love for Mlle Kably had probably caused me more pain than pleasure.

While I had these sentiments for Victorine, so innocent in words and even in thought, I forgot to hate, and, above all, to believe that I was hated.

It seems to me that after a certain time Rémy's fraternal jealousy grew calmer; or else he went to spend a few months at Saint-Ismier. He saw perhaps that I was not really in love, or else he had an affair of his own; we were all little scheming diplomats of thirteen or fourteen years old. But by that age, in Dauphiné, one is very subtle; we have not got the lightheartedness of the boys of Paris, and passion seizes hold of us early. Passions for trifles, but at any rate the fact remains that we desire things passionately.

However that may be, I used to go, quite five times a week, at nightfall or curfew (the *sing* or bell which rang at Saint-André at nine o'clock), to spend the evening with Mlle Bigillion.

Without making any allusion to the friendship which existed between us, I was imprudent enough to mention this family one day while having supper with my relations. I was severely punished for my thoughtlessness. I saw the most expressive pantomime of contempt for Victorine's family and father.

"Is there not a daughter? Some country miss, I suppose?"

I have only a faint recollection of the terms of horrible contempt and the expression of cold disdain which accompanied these words. I have no memory of anything but the scorching impression which this contempt produced upon me. It must have been exactly the same air of cold, mocking contempt which the Baron des Adrets no doubt used in speaking of my mother and aunt.

My family, in spite of their condition as lawyers and doctors, believed themselves to be on the fringe of the nobility; my father even went so far as to have pretensions to being a gentleman who had come down in the world. All the contempt which was expressed that evening, during the whole of supper, was based on the fact that M. Bigillion, my friends' father, had the condition of a country bourgeois, and on the fact that his younger brother, a very shrewd man, was the director of the de-

partmental prison, on the Place Saint-André, a sort of middle-class jailer.

This family had entertained Saint Bruno at the Grande Chartreuse in 1080. This was certainly more respectable than the Beyle family, who had been village judges under the medieval lords of Sassenage. But good old M. Bigillion, a man of pleasure, who lived very comfortably in his village, did not dine with M. de Marcien or Mme de Sassenage, and was the first to salute my grandfather as soon as he saw him in the distance; he spoke of M. Gagnon, moreover, with the highest esteem.

This outburst of arrogance was a distraction for my family, who were as a rule expiring with boredom; and I lost my appetite for the whole of suppertime at hearing my friends treated like this. They asked what was the matter with me. I answered that I had had tea very late. Lying is the sole resource of the weak. I was dying of rage with myself: What! I had been stupid enough to speak to my relations about what interested me?

This contempt threw me into a profound agitation. I can see the reason for this now; it was Victorine. So it was not, then, with that terrible animal, so much dreaded but so exclusively adored—a pretty woman of good position—that I had the pleasure of conversing almost every evening.

After four or five days of cruel suffering, Victorine won the day, and I declared her to be more amiable and in better society than my dismal, shriveled (that was my expression), unsociable family, who never invited anybody to supper, and never entered a *salon* where there were ten people together; whereas Mlle Bigillion, both at M. Faure's house at Saint-Ismier and at that of her mother's relatives at Chapareillan, was often present at dinners of twenty-five persons. She was even more noble than they were, on account of the reception of Saint Bruno in 1080.

Many years later I saw the mechanism of what was then going on in my heart, and, for lack of a better

word, I called it "crystallization" (the word which so shocked that great man of letters who was Minister of the Interior in 1833, the Comte d'Argout, an amusing scene described by "Clara Gazul"¹).

This process of exoneration from contempt lasted quite five or six days, during which I thought of nothing else. This insult, gloriously insignificant as it was, placed a fresh event between Mlle Kably and my state at that moment. My innocence was not aware of it, but this was a great point: it is necessary to put fresh events between ourselves and our grief, even if we do it by breaking an arm.

I had just bought a good edition of Bezout, and had had it carefully bound (perhaps it is still in existence at Grenoble, in the possession of M. Alexandre Mallein, Director of Taxes); I drew on it a wreath of leaves with a capital V in the middle. Every day I looked at this monument.

After the death of Séraphie, my need for affection might have reconciled me with my family; this display of arrogance placed Victorine between them and me. I would have forgiven them if they had imputed some crime to the Bigillion family, but contempt! And it was my grandfather who had expressed it with the most grace, and consequently with the most effect.

I was careful not to talk to my relations about the other friends whom I made at this time: MM. Galle, La Bayette . . .

Galle was the son of a widow who loved nobody but him, and respected him, in all honesty, as master of their fortune; the father must have been some old officer. This spectacle, which was so strange to me, attracted and touched me. "Ah! if my poor mother had lived," I would say to myself, "if at least I had had any relations of the same kind as Mme Galle, how I should have

¹ "Clara Gazul": Stendhal's friend Prosper Mérimée, whose *Théâtre de Clara Gazul* appeared in 1825.

loved them!" Mme Galle had a great respect for me, as the grandson of M. Gagnon, the benefactor of the poor, to whom he would give free treatment and even two pounds of beef to make beef tea. My father was unknown.

Galle was pale, thin, pitted with smallpox; he was, moreover, of a very cold, very moderate, very prudent character. He felt that he was the absolute master of his little fortune, and that he must not lose it. He was simple, honest, and not in the least a braggart or a liar. It seems to me that he left Grenoble and the Central School before me, and went to join the navy at Toulon.

The amiable La Bayette, a nephew or relation of Admiral (I mean Rear-Admiral or Vice-Admiral) Morard de Galles, also intended to go into the navy.

He was as charming and noble as Galle was worthy. I can still remember the pleasant afternoons which we used to spend conversing together at the window of his little bedroom. It was on the third floor of a house overlooking the Place Neuve du Département. There I used to share his tea—of apples and brown bread. I hungered for all conversation that was sincere and free from hypocrisy. To these two merits, which were common to all my friends, La Bayette added a great nobility of sentiment and manners, and a tenderness of soul which was not, as with Bigillion, capable of deep passion, but had more elegance of expression.

It seems to me that he gave me good advice at the time of my love for Mlle Kably, about whom I dared to speak to him, he was so sincere and good. We put together all our small experience of women, or, rather, all the little knowledge drawn from the novels we had read. We must have been funny to listen to.

Soon after my Aunt Séraphie departed this life, I had read and adored the *Secret Memoirs* of Duclos, which my grandfather was reading.

It seems to me that it was in the mathematical classroom that I made the acquaintance of Galle and La Bayette; it was certainly there that I became friendly with Louis de Barral (now the oldest and best of my friends; he is the person on earth who loves me the most, and accordingly there is no sacrifice, it seems to me, that I would not make for him).

He was then very small and very thin; he had a reputation for carrying to excess a bad habit which we all shared, and it must be said that he looked like it. But his appearance was singularly enhanced by a magnificent uniform of a lieutenant in the Engineers; this was called being an *adjoint*, or deputy officer in the Engineers; this should have been a good means of rallying the rich families to the Revolution, or, at least, of mitigating their hatred for it.

Anglès, afterward Comte Anglès and prefect of the police, enriched by the Bourbons, was also an *adjoint* in the Engineers, and so was a creature named Giroud, who was essentially inferior, and was adorned with red hair; not the same as the Giroud with a red coat with whom I used frequently to fight. I used to make great fun of this Giroud, who sported the gold epaulet and who was much bigger than I was; that is to say, he was a man of eighteen, while I was still an infant of thirteen or fourteen. This difference of two or three years is immense at college; it is almost as great as the difference between a nobleman and a commoner in Piedmont.

The qualities in Barral which made an immediate conquest of me the first time that we talked together (at that time he had as his supervisor, it seems to me, Pierre-Vincent Chalvet, the history master, who was suffering badly from the elder sister of smallpox), what made a conquest of me, then, was (1) the beauty of his coat, the blue of which seemed to me enchanting; (2) his manner of saying these two verses of Voltaire, which I can still remember:

*Vous êtes, lui dit-il, l'existence et l'essence,
Simple . . .*

His mother, a very great lady ("she was a Grolée," my grandfather would say respectfully), was the last of her order to wear its costume; I can still see her, near the statue of Hercules, in the public garden, with a flowered dress—I mean to say, of white satin ornamented with flowers—with her robe tucked up into her pockets like my grandmother (Jeanne Dupéron Beyle, when a widow), an enormous powdered chignon, and perhaps a little dog under her arm. The little ragamuffins followed her admiringly at a distance, and as for me, I was led, or carried, by the faithful Lambert; I must have been three or four years old at the time of this vision. This great lady had the manners of China; the Marquis de Barral, her husband, a President, or even first President of the *Parlement*, refused to emigrate, for which reason he was as much scorned by my family as if he had received twenty slaps in the face.

The wise M. Destutt de Tracy had the same idea in Paris, and was obliged to make the necessary arrangements, like M. de Barral, who was called M. de Montferrat before the Revolution—that is to say, the Marquis de Montferrat (pronounce *Montferâ*, with a long *a*); M. de Tracy was reduced to living on the salary of his place as a clerk in the Ministry of Public Instruction, I think; M. de Barral had kept an income of twenty thousand or twenty-five thousand francs, of which he surrendered half or two thirds in 1793, not to the country, but to fear of the guillotine. Perhaps he had been kept in France by his love for Mme de Brémont, whom he afterward married. I met young M. Brémont in the army, where he was, I think, a major in the infantry, afterward under-inspector of Reviews, and always a man of pleasure.

I do not say that his father-in-law, First President de Barral (for Napoleon made him First President when

he created the Imperial Courts of Law), was a genius, but in my eyes he was so much the opposite of my father, and had such a horror of pedantry and of wounding his son's self-esteem, that when they left the house to go for a walk in the wastelands of the Drac (the *Délaissés du Drac*), if the father said *Bonjour*, the son would answer *Toujours*, the father *Oie*, the son *Lamproie*, and the walk passed like this in finding rhythms and trying to trip each other up.

The father taught his son the *Satires* of Voltaire (the only perfect thing, in my opinion, done by this great reformer).

It was then that I had my first glimpse of the manners of good society, and they made a conquest of me on the spot.

I was forever comparing this father who made rhymes, and was full of delicate consideration for his children's self-esteem, with the gloomy pedantry of my own. I had the most profound respect for M. Gagnon's learning; I loved him sincerely. But I did not go so far as to say to myself: "Could one not unite the boundless learning of my grandfather with the gay and charming amiability of M. de Barral?"

But my heart had, so to speak, a presentiment of this idea, which was later to become fundamental for me.

I had already seen the manners of good society, half disfigured and masked by bigotry, at the pious evening parties in which Mme de Vaulserre used to gather together, on the ground floor of the Des Adrets' mansion, M. de Bouchage (a ruined peer of France), M. de Saint-Vallier (the great Saint-Vallier), his brother Scipion, M. de Pina (ex-mayor of Grenoble, profoundly jesuitical, with an income of eighty thousand francs and seventeen children), MM. de Sinard, de Saint-Ferréol, myself, Mlle Bonne de Saint-Vallier (whose beautiful arms, white and

charming like those of a Venetian, moved me so deeply).

The parish priest, Chélan, and M. Barthélemy d'Orbane were also models. Father Ducros had the manners of genius. (The word "genius" was then to me what the word "God" is to bigots.)



CHAPTER XXIX

I did not see M. de Barral in such a fine light at that time; he was the *bête noire* of my relations because he had not emigrated.¹

Necessity made me hypocritical (a fault of which I have cured myself too successfully, and the lack of which has done me so much harm—at Rome, for instance); and I mentioned to my family the names of MM. de la Bayette and de Barral, my new friends.

“La Bayette! A good family,” said my grandfather; “his father was captain of a ship; his uncle, M. de —, was a President of the *Parlement*. As for Montferrat, he is an undistinguished fellow.”

It must be admitted that one day, at two o'clock in the morning, some municipal guards, accompanied by M. de Barral, had come to arrest M. d'Anthon, a former counselor of the *Parlement*, who lived on the first floor, and whose constant occupation was to walk up and down his great hall biting his nails. The poor devil was losing his eyesight, and was, moreover, a notorious suspect, like my father. He was pious to the verge of fanaticism, but, with that exception, was not ill-natured. They considered it unworthy of M. de Barral to have come to arrest a counselor who had been one of his colleagues when he was a President of the *Parlement*.

It must be agreed that a bourgeois of France about 1794, when I was beginning to be able to understand them, was a funny animal, complaining bitterly of the arrogance of the nobles, but, among themselves, respect-

¹ Text says: “*pour avoir émigré*,” but see Ch. XXVIII, p. 222.

ing a man for no other reason than his birth. Virtue, kindness, generosity had nothing to do with it; the more distinguished a man was, even, the more vigorously they reproached him with his lack of birth, and such birth!

About 1803, when my uncle, Romain Gagnon, came to Paris and stayed with me in the rue de Nemours, I did not present him to Mme de Neuilly; there was a reason for this: such a lady did not exist. Shocked by the omission of this presentation, my good Aunt Elisabeth said: "There must be something very odd, otherwise Henri would have taken his uncle to see this lady; one is glad to show *that one was not born under a cabbage*."

It is I, if you please, who was not born under a cabbage.

And when our cousin Clet, who was horribly ugly—he not only looked like an apothecary, but actually was one, for he was an army chemist—was on the point of getting married in Italy, my Aunt Elisabeth made the following answer to someone who was finding fault with his abominable figure:

"It must be admitted that he is a regular *Margageat* [scullion, low fellow]," said this person.

"Yes, if you like; but he has a good birth! To be a cousin of the first doctor in Grenoble—is that nothing?"

The character of this excellent old maid was a striking example of the maxim *noblesse oblige*. I know of nothing generous, noble, or difficult which was too much for her and her disinterestedness. I owe it partly to her that I speak well; if a vulgar word escaped me, she would say: "Oh! Henri!" And her face expressed a cold disdain of which the remembrance haunted me (pursued me for a long time).

I have known families which spoke as well as, but not one in which they spoke better than in mine. This is not to say that they did not habitually make the eight or ten characteristic mistakes of Dauphiné.

But if I used a word which was vague or pretentious,

I at once became the butt of a jest, which gave my grandfather all the more pleasure since these were about the only jokes which the morose piety of my Aunt Séraphie would allow the poor man. In order to avoid a mocking glance from this man of wit, one had to employ the simplest turn of phrase and the right word, and yet take care not to use a vulgar word.

I have seen children of rich families in Paris always using the most ambitious turns of phrase in order to produce a noble style, and their parents applauding this attempt at grandiloquence. The young Parisians would readily say "courser" instead of "horse"; hence their admiration for MM. de Salvandy, Chateaubriand, etc.

There was, moreover, at that time, a depth and truth of sentiment in a young man of fourteen in Dauphiné which I have never noticed in the young Parisian. On the other hand, we always pronounced our final *s*'s: "*J'étais au Cour-se, où M. Passe-kin [Pasquin] m'a lu une pièce de ver-se, sur le voyage d'Anver-se à Calai-ce.*"

It was only on my arrival in Paris, in 1799, that I realized there was another pronunciation. I afterward took lessons from the famous La Rive¹ and from Dugazon,² to rid myself of the last traces of the drawling accent of my province. I have only two or three words of it left now (I pronounce *côte*, a little hill, *kote*, instead of *kaute*; so the good Abbé Gattel was quite right to note the pronunciation in his excellent dictionary, a thing which was recently condemned by a fool of a "man of letters" in Paris); and the firm, passionate accent of the Midi, which reveals force of sentiment, the energy of one's love or hate, at once becomes singular in Paris, and therefore verging on the ridiculous.

So when I was conversing with my friends Bigillion, La Bayette, Galle, and Barral, I used to say *chose* instead of *chause*, *cote* instead of *caute*.

¹ La Rive: a famous tragic actor (1749-1827) who published a treatise on elocution.

² Dugazon: a celebrated comic actor who died in 1809.

Barral used to come every morning from La Tronche, it seems to me, and spend the day with Pierre-Vincent Chalvet, the history master, who had his lodging in college, under the arch. Toward B there was also a pretty lime avenue, very narrow, but the lime trees were old and leafy, though clipped. The view was delicious. There I used to walk with Barral, who came from the point C near by; M. Chalvet, who was busy with his prostitutes, his pox, and the books which he used to make up, and was, moreover, the most thoughtless of men, was quite pleased to let him slip out.

I think it was while we were taking a walk to the point P that we met Michoud, who had a face like an ox, but was an excellent man (whose only fault has been to die a rotten ministerialist, and a counselor at the Royal Courts, about 1827). I am inclined to believe that this excellent man considered probity obligatory only among individuals, and held it always permissible to betray one's duties as a citizen in order to get money out of the government. I draw an enormous distinction between him and his colleague Félix Faure; the latter was born with a base soul; that is why he is a peer of France, and First President of the Royal Courts at Grenoble.

But, whatever may have been poor Michoud's motives in selling his country at the desire of the Attorney General, about 1795, he was the best, the most natural, the most subtle, but the most simple-hearted of friends.

I believe he had learned to read, with Barral, at Mlle Chavand's school; they used often to talk of their adventures in this little class. (The rivalries, the friendships, the hatreds of the world were already to be found there!) How I envied them! I believe I even lied once or twice, by leading other companions of mine to suppose that I too had learned to read at Mlle Chavand's.

Michoud was fond of me up till his death and I was not ungrateful for his affection; I had the lightest esteem for his good sense and kindness. Another time we went

for each other with our fists, and as he was twice as big as I was, he gave me a thrashing.

I blamed myself for my outburst, not because of the blows I received, but because I had misjudged his extreme kindness. I was quick-witted and used to make epigrams, which earned me many a blow, and this same characteristic had more serious consequences in Italy and Germany when I was in the army. When I was in Paris, it brought upon me the most violent criticism in the lower walks of literature.

When a good thing comes into my head, I see its charm, but not its ill nature. I am always surprised to see that it can be taken in an ill-natured sense; for instance, it was Ampère or A. de Jussieu who pointed out to me the implication of my remark to that scoundrel the Vicomte de la Passe (Civita-Vecchia, September 1831 or 1832): "Might I be so bold as to ask you your name?" which La Passe will never forgive me.

I no longer say these things now, out of prudence, and only the other day Don Filippo Caetani did me the justice to say that I was one of the least ill-natured men he had ever seen, although I had a reputation for being a man of very great wit, but very ill-natured, and even more immoral (immoral because I have written about women in *L'Amour*, and because I cannot help making fun of the hypocrites, a body of people even more respected at Paris—would it be believed?—than at Rome).

Recently Mme Toldi of the Teatro Valle said to Prince Caetani, as I was leaving her dressing-room:

"That is M. de Stendhal, that witty man, who is *so immoral*."

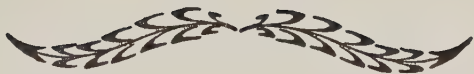
And she is an actress who has had a baby by Prince Leopold of Syracuse of the Naples branch of the Bourbons. The excellent Don Filippo defended me most seriously against the charge of immorality.

I cannot even say that a yellow cabriolet has passed down the street without being unlucky enough to give mortal offense to the hypocrites, and even to the stupid.

But on the whole, dear reader, I do not know what I am: good-natured or ill-natured, witty or stupid. What I do know perfectly are the things which give me pain or pleasure, the things which I desire or hate.

A drawing-room full of provincials who had made money, for instance, and make a parade of luxury, is my pet aversion. And next to that comes a room full of marquises and Grand Crosses of the Legion of Honor, making a parade of morality.

A *salon* of eight or ten people, where all the women have had lovers, where the conversation is gay and full of anecdote, and where they drink a light punch half an hour after midnight, is the place in the world where I am the most at ease; there, in the surroundings I like, I would infinitely rather listen to someone else speaking than talk myself. I gladly sink into the silence of *happiness*, and if I talk, it is only *to pay for my entrance ticket*, an expression, used in this sense, which I have introduced into Paris society. It is like "*floriture*" (imported by me), which I am constantly coming across. It must be admitted that I less frequently meet with my word "*crystallization*" (see *L'Amour*). But I do not care about it the least little bit in the world: if anyone can find a better word, with more standing in the language, to express the same idea, I shall be the first to applaud it and to make use of it.



CHAPTER XXX

I can see now that one quality common to all my friends was naturalness, or an absence of hypocrisy. Mme Vignon and my Aunt Séraphie had given me a horror of this quality—the first condition of success in present-day society—that has done me much harm, and goes to the lengths of sheer physical nausea. Prolonged association with a hypocrite makes me begin to feel sick (just as, a month ago, the Chevalier Naytall's Italian obliged the Countess Sandra to unlace her stays).

Grand-Dufay, an extremely witty fellow, was not distinguished by his *naturalness*; and so he was never more than a *literary* friend—that is to say, the friendship was full of jealousy on his side, and mistrust on mine, and each of us had a high esteem for the other.

He carried off the first prize for general grammar, in the same year, as it seems to me, that I won the first prize for literature. But which year was that? Was it 1796 or 1795? I am greatly in need of the archives of the Prefecture: our names were printed on a placard of folio size and posted up. M. de Tracy's wise law surrounded the examinations with great pomp. Were they not concerned with the hope of the country? It was an education for the member of the departmental administration (that moral product of the despotism of Mme du Barry) as much as for the pupil.

What was to be done, in 1796, with all men over twenty? To save the country from the harm which they were disposed to do it, and to await their death as best might be.

This is as true as it is sad to say. What a relief for the Vessel of State, in 1836, if everyone over fifty were suddenly to be gathered to their forefathers! Except, of course, "the King, my wife, and me."

In one of the numerous illuminations which took place every month, from 1789 to 1791, a bourgeois put up this transparency:

LONG LIVE
THE KING
MY WIFE AND I

Grand-Dufay, the eldest of four or five brothers, was a thin little creature without much flesh on his bones, with a big head, a face badly pitted with smallpox and yet very red, and eyes that were brilliant but false, with something of the disquieting liveliness of a wild boar. He was tricky, and never imprudent in speech; always ready to praise, but in the most moderate terms possible. One might have taken him for a Member of the Institute. He had, moreover, a very quick intelligence, which grasped affairs admirably, but even at that early age he was consumed by ambition. He was the eldest son and spoiled child (a local expression) of a mother who had the same character, and not without reason: the family was a poor one.

What an admirable P—— Dufay would have made! (I refer to a solicitor-general sold to the powers that be and knowing how to give a favorable color to the most infamous acts of injustice.)

But he did not live, and on the occasion of his death in Paris, about 1803, I shall have to accuse myself of one of the worst sentiments in my life, one of those which make me hesitate the most about continuing these Memoirs. I had forgotten it since 1803 or 1804, the date of his death. It is curious how many things I recall, now that I am writing these Confessions. They come to me all of a sudden, and it seems to me that I judge them impar-

tially. Every moment I see the *better part* which I did *not* choose.

But who the devil will have the patience to read these things?

My friends, when I go out in the street in a new and well-cut coat, would give a crown to have a glass of dirty water thrown over me. The sentence is badly constructed, but the statement is true (I of course except the excellent Comte de Barral; he has a character like La Fontaine).

Where is the reader who, after four or five volumes of *I* and *me*, will not want to have, not a glass of dirty water, but a bottle of ink thrown over me? And yet, reader, all the harm lies simply in these seven letters: B, R, U, L, A, R, D, which form my name, and interest my self-love. Supposing I had written BERNARD, this book would cease to be anything more than a novel written in the first person, like *The Vicar of Wakefield* (my rival in innocence).

It will be necessary for the person to whom I have bequeathed this posthumous work to have, at the very least, all the details shortened by some hack editor, the M. Amédée Pichot or the M. Courchamp of the period. It has been said that one never goes so far in a "work in ink" (*opera d'inchiostrò*) as when one does not know where one is going; if that were always so, the present Memoirs, which give a picture of a *man's heart*, to use the expression of MM. Victor Hugo, d'Arlincourt, Soulié, Raymond, etc., ought to be something very fine. The *I's* and *me's* were tormenting me yesterday evening (January 14, 1836) while I was listening to Rossini's *Moses*. Good music makes me think with greater clearness and intensity about what is occupying my mind. But for that to happen, the period of *judgment* must be over; it is so long since I arrived at my judgment on the *Moses* (in 1823) that I have forgotten the verdict, and I no longer think about it; I am now no more than the "Slave of the Ring," as they say in the *Arabian Nights*.

Memories come crowding as I write. Why, I perceive that I have forgotten one of my most intimate friends, Louis Crozet, now a chief engineer, and a very worthy chief engineer, at Grenoble, but buried alive there, like "the Baron buried opposite his wife." Thanks to her, he is sunk in the narrow selfishness of a jealous, petty, middle-class society, in a mountain township of our province (La Mure, Corps or Le Bourg d'Oisans).

Louis Crozet was born to be one of the most brilliant men in Paris; in a *salon* he would have surpassed Koreff, Pariset, Lagarde, and myself after them, if one may be allowed to allude to oneself. With a pen in his hand, he would have been a wit of the type of Duclos, the author of the *Essai sur les Mœurs* (but this book will perhaps be dead in 1880), the man who, to quote d'Alembert's saying, "had the greatest amount of wit in a given time."

It was, I believe, "at Latin" (as we used to say) at M. Durand's that I became friendly with Crozet, who was then the ugliest and most ungainly child in the Central School; he must have been born about 1784.

He had a round, pallid face, badly pitted with small-pox, and little blue eyes, very bright, but with their rims all red and ravaged by this cruel disease; to this was added a touch of pedantry and ill humor in his manner; he walked badly and had crooked legs, and his whole life was the absolute antipodes of elegance, but with an unfortunate effort to be elegant. Yet, with all this, he had "a spirit all divine" (La Fontaine). His moments of sensibility were rare, but when they came, he loved his country passionately and would, I think, have been capable of heroism in case of need. In an assembly sitting in judgment on Hampden, he would have been a hero; and for me that is saying everything. (See the Life of Hampden, by Lord King or Dacre, his great-grandson.¹)

Finally, it is in him that I recognized a greater wit

¹ "Lord King or Dacre": Lord Nugent's *Memorial of John Hampden* had appeared in 1831.

and sagacity, by far, than in any other man in Dauphiné; and he had that audacity tempered by shyness which is necessary in order to shine in a Paris *salon*; like General Foy, he became animated as he talked.

He was very useful to me by reason of this latter quality (sagacity), which I lacked entirely by nature, and with which he partly succeeded in inoculating me, as it seems to me. I say *partly*, for I always have to force myself to it. And if I discover something, I am given to exaggerating my discovery and seeing nothing else beside it.

I excuse this defect in my intelligence by calling it a "necessary effect" and *sine qua non* of a hypersensitive temperament.

When an idea seizes hold on me too violently in the middle of the street, I *fall down*. For instance: in the rue de la Rochelle, near the rue des Filles Saint-Thomas, my only fall for five or six years was caused about 1826 by this problem: "In order best to serve his ambitions, ought M. Debelleyme, or ought he not, to have himself nominated as a deputy?" It was at the time when M. Debelleyme, the Prefect of Police (the only popular magistrate in the days of the elder branch of the Bourbons), was making awkward attempts to become a deputy.

When ideas come to me in the middle of the street, I am always on the point of bumping into a passer-by, or falling over, or being run over by a carriage. Near the rue d'Amboise, one day in Paris (this is one example out of a hundred), I looked at Dr. Edwards without recognizing him. I mean to say, there were two mental operations: one of them, it is true, said: "There is Dr. Edwards"; but the second was so taken up with this thought that it failed to add: "I must say good-morning and talk to him." The doctor was greatly surprised, but not annoyed; he did not take it for the pose of genius (as MM. Prunelle, the former mayor of Lyons, the ugliest man in France, Jules-César Boissat, the most con-

ceited man, Félix Faure, and many others of my friends and acquaintances would have done).

I was fortunate enough to meet Louis Crozet again in Paris, in 1800; in Paris, from 1803 to 1806; at Plancy, from 1810 to 1814, where I went to see him, and stabled my horses during some mission or other of the Emperor's. Finally, we slept in the same room (Hôtel de Hambourg, rue de l'Université) on the night of the capture of Paris in 1814. He had indigestion during the night, out of grief; I, who was losing everything, looked upon it all more in the light of a spectacle. And, besides, I was in a bad temper owing to the Duc de Bassano's stupid correspondence with me, when I was in the 7th army division with the old Comte de Saint-Vallier, who was in his second childhood.

I was also in a bad temper, to the shame of my intelligence I confess it, at the Emperor's conduct toward the deputation of the Legislative Body,² one of whom was that impressionable and eloquent idiot named Laisné (of Bordeaux), afterward a Viscount and a peer of France, who died in 1835, at the same time as Roederer, that heartless man, absolutely devoid of all sensibility.

When I was with Crozet, so as not to waste our time in chattering about our admiration for La Fontaine, Corneille, or Shakespeare, we used to write what we called "Characters." (I only wish I could see one of them today.)

These were six or eight folio pages giving an account (under a fictitious name) of the character of someone of our acquaintance to a jury composed of Helvétius, Tracy, and Machiavelli, or else Helvétius, Montesquieu,

²On the eve of his downfall, Napoleon had summoned to Fontainebleau a deputation of the Legislative Assembly, which under the Empire had existed merely to register the Emperor's decisions. When he appealed to them for their support, Laisné, voicing the sentiments of the Assembly, had made their support conditional on the grant of full political rights.

and Shakespeare. Such were the objects of our admiration at that time.

We read together Adam Smith and Jean-Baptiste Say, and we abandoned this science on finding in it obscure or even contradictory points. We were first-rate at mathematics, and, after his three years at the *École polytechnique*, Crozet was so good at chemistry that he was offered a position similar to that of M. Thénard³ (who is now a peer of France, but was in our eyes at that time a man without genius; we adored only Lagrange and Monge; even Laplace was hardly more to us than a *spirit of light* destined to spread understanding, but not to invent). Crozet and I read Montaigne and I do not know how many times we read Letourneur's Shakespeare (although we knew English very well).

We used to settle down to work for five or six hours, after taking our coffee, at the Hôtel de Hambourg, rue de l'Université, with a view of the Museum of French Monuments, a charming and very nearly perfect creation, which was abolished by those dull Bourbons.

There is perhaps some pride in the term "excellent mathematician" which I ascribe to myself above. I never knew the differential or integral calculus, but there was a time when I passed my life in thinking with pleasure of the art of constructing equations—of what I would call, if I might so dare, the metaphysic of mathematics. I carried off the first prize (and not by favor; on the contrary, my arrogance had prejudiced them against me) from eight young men who, a month later, at the end of 1799, were all admitted as students at the *École polytechnique*.

I must have had quite six or eight hundred evenings of stern labor (*labor improbus*) with Louis Crozet, each lasting for five or six hours. This work, grave and with knitted brows, we called "swotting" (*piocher*, to use the

³Thénard (1777-1837): a famous French chemist, who was made a baron.

pick, dig hard, was the word used at the *École polytechnique*). These sittings formed my real literary education; it gave us acute pleasure to go in search of truth in this manner, to the great scandal of Jean-Louis Basset (now the Baron de Richebourg, an auditor at the Law Courts, a retired *sous-préfet* and ex-lover of a Montmorency, rich and conceited, with no intelligence, but not ill-natured). This creature, who was four feet three tall, and in despair at having the name of Basset, used to lodge with Crozet at the Hôtel de Hambourg. I do not know that he had any other merit than that of having had a bayonet wound in the chest. I remember the lapels of his coat, one day that we climbed from the parterre and mobbed the stage at the Théâtre Français in honor of Mlle Duchesnois (but, good heavens! I am encroaching), an actress of excellence in two or three rôles, who died in 1835.

Crozet and I had not the slightest indulgence for each other when we worked together; we were always afraid of being led astray by vanity, not finding any of our friends capable of arguing with us on these matters.

These friends were the two Bassets, Louis de Barral (my intimate friend, and an intimate also of Louis Crozet), Plana (a professor at Turin and a member of all the Academies and orders in this country). Crozet and Plana, who were both my friends, were a year behind me in mathematics; they were learning arithmetic while I was at trigonometry and the elements of algebra.



CHAPTER XXXI

My grandfather did not like M. Dubois-Fontanelle; he was a man made up of cultivated and pitiless vanity, a man of the great world, as compared with a vast number of persons about whom he spoke in kindly terms but whom he did not like.

I think, on consideration, that he was afraid of being despised as a man of letters by poor M. Dubois, who had written a tragedy which had had the honor to send his bookseller to the galleys. I allude to *Ericie, or the Vestal*.¹ It was evidently *Ericie, or the Nun*, or the *Mélanie* of that intriguing fellow Laharpe, whose cold genius had, I think, stolen this subject from poor M. Dubois-Fontanelle, who was always so poor that he had adopted a horribly fine handwriting in order to use less paper.

Poor M. Dubois went to Paris fairly young, full of love for the Beautiful. His constant poverty forced him to seek the useful; he could never raise himself to the level of those "Jean Sucres" of the first water, such as Laharpe, Marmontel, etc. Necessity forced him to undertake the composition of the political articles in the *Journal des Deux-Ponts*, and, what is worse, he there married a big, fat German, an ex-mistress of Maximilian Joseph, King of Bavaria, who was then Prince Max and a French colonel.

Her elder daughter, of whom the King was the father, was married to a M. Renauldon, a vain creature who was made to be a good mayor of a large provincial town. Indeed, he was a good mayor of Grenoble from 1800 to 1814, I think, and was, moreover, outrageously cuckolded by my cousin Pelot, a king of fools, who got into dis-

¹ *Ericie, or the Vestal*: this play, represented at the Théâtre Français in 1767, gained some notoriety because it was held by the censor to be an attack on convents. Its sale was forbidden, and three itinerant booksellers were sent to the galleys for attempting to sell it at Lyons (in 1768). Laharpe's *Mélanie* appeared shortly afterward, in 1770.

knew him well as a man of letters, under the name of M. Jérôme, about 1826. All these clever men who are disappointed in their ambitions take to literature as a last resource. Thanks to their intrigues, which they have reduced to a science, and to their political friends, they obtain an *appearance* of success, but, as a matter of fact, only incur *ridicule*. Among men of this sort I have seen M. Roederer, M. Français (of Nantes), and even the Comte Daru, when by his poem on *Astronomy* (published after his death) he had himself made an associate of the Academy of Sciences. These three men of great intelligence and subtlety, who were certainly in the first rank among counselors of state and prefects, had never seen that little geometrical figure invented by me, a mere auditor, a month ago.³

If, on arriving in Paris, poor M. Dubois, who took the name of Fontanelle, had found an allowance of a hundred louis on condition that he wrote (like Beethoven, about 1805, at Vienna), he would have cultivated the Beautiful; that is to say, he would have imitated, not nature, but Voltaire.

Instead of this, he was obliged to translate the *Metamorphoses* of Ovid, and, what is worse, some English books. This excellent man gave me the idea of learning English, and lent me the first volume of Gibbon, and I saw on this occasion that he pronounced it: *Té istory of té fall*. He had learned English without a master, owing to his poverty, and by the use of the dictionary.

I did not learn English till many years later, when I invented the idea of learning by heart the first four pages of *The Vicar of Wakefield* (*Ouaikefilde*). This was, it seems to me, about 1805. Somebody had the same idea in Rome, I think, and I did not hear of it till 1815,

³ He adds a note: "b, the way which we take at the age of seven, often unconsciously. It is supremely absurd to desire, at the age of fifty, to leave the way R and the way P for the way L. Frederick II hardly succeeded in getting his works read, and for twenty years he dreamed of the way L."

when I came across a few *Edinburgh Reviews* in Germany.

M. Dubois-Fontanelle was almost crippled with gout; his fingers had become quite shapeless. He was polite, obliging, ready to do a service; for the rest, his character had been crushed by constant misfortune.

The *Journal des Deux-Ponts* having been conquered by the revolutionary armies, M. Dubois did not, for all that, turn *aristocrat*, but, strange to say, always remained a *French citizen*. This will appear simple about 1880, but was nothing less than a miracle in 1796.

Look at my father, who owed it to the Revolution that he took the rank due to his talents; that he was the first deputy mayor who exercised the functions of mayor of Grenoble, and a Chevalier of the Legion of Honor; and who abhorred the Revolution which had raised him out of the mire.

The poor and worthy M. Fontanelle, abandoned by his newspaper, arrived in Grenoble with his fat German wife, who, in spite of her previous profession, had vulgar manners and little money. He was only too glad to become a schoolmaster, with a lodging provided for him, and he even went and occupied an apartment at the southwest corner of the courtyard of the college before it was finished.

At B was his fine octavo edition of Voltaire, by Kehl, the only one of his books that this excellent man would not lend. His books were annotated in his handwriting, which it was fortunately almost impossible to read without a magnifying-glass. He had lent me *Émile*, and was very nervous, because opposite that wild piece of declamation of J. J. Rousseau, "The death of Socrates is that of a man; the death of Jesus Christ is that of a God," he had added, on a flyleaf, a very reasonable but not very eloquent commentary, ending with a maxim which was the absolute contrary.

This flyleaf would have damaged him very much, even in the eyes of my grandfather. What would it have

been if my father had seen it? About this time my father refused to buy Bayle's *Dictionnaire* at our cousin Drier's sale (this cousin was a man of pleasure), so as not to endanger my religion; and he told me so.

M. Fontanelle was too crushed by misfortune, and by the character of his termagant of a wife, to be enthusiastic; he had not the slightest spark of the Abbé Ducros's ardor; and so he had hardly any influence on my character.

It seems to me that I went to these lessons with that little Jesuit Paul-Émile Teisseire, the big Marquis (a good-natured, foppish, rich young man from Rives or Moirans), and Benoît, a simple-minded fellow who sincerely believed himself to be a Plato because Dr. Clapier had taught him to love (in the style of the Bishop of Clogher).

This did not horrify us, because it would have horrified our parents, but we were astonished. I can see now that what we aspired to was a conquest of that terrible animal, a charming woman, who could judge of the merit of men—and not pleasure. We found pleasure everywhere. The gloomy Benoît did not make any proselytes.

Soon the big "Marquis," who was a distant relation of mine, as it seems to me, could not understand the lessons any more, and left us. It seems to me that we had also a Penet, one or two Gauthiers, weak minds (*minus habens*) of no importance.

In this class, as in all the others, there was an examination in the middle of the year. I gained a marked advantage over that little Jesuit of a Paul-Émile, who used to learn everything by heart, and for this reason alarmed me very much, for I have *no memory*.

This is one of the faults of my mind: I ruminate incessantly on what interests me; by dint of looking at it from different *mental positions*, I end by seeing something new in it, and *I change its aspect*.

I pull out the tubes of my glass in every direction, or

I close them up again, to use the metaphor employed by M. de Tracy (see his *Logic*).

That little Jesuit Paul-Émile, with his false, honeyed tones, made me very nervous in this examination. Fortunately a M. Tortebeau, of Vienne, a member of the departmental administration, pressed me with questions. I was obliged to invent answers, and I triumphed over Paul-Émile, who only knew by heart the summary of the course of lessons.

In my written composition there was even a sort of idea on the subject of J. J. Rousseau and the praises which he deserved.

All that I learned at the lessons of M. Dubois-Fontanelle was in my eyes, as it were, an outward or false knowledge.

I believed I had *Genius*—where the devil had I got this idea from?—genius for the profession of Molière and Rousseau.

I had a sincere and sovereign contempt for the talent of Voltaire: I found him *puerile*. I had a sincere respect for Pierre Corneille, Ariosto, Shakespeare, Cervantes, and, in words, for Molière. My difficulty was to reconcile them.

My idea of beauty in literature is, in essentials, the same as in 1796, but every six months it becomes more perfect, or, if you like, it changes a little.

It is the *sole labor of my whole life*.

All the rest has been nothing but a *means of gaining a livelihood*, together with a little vanity at gaining it as well as another; I except my post as officer of commissariat at Brunswick after the departure of Martial. There, there was the *attraction of novelty* and the reproof which M. Daru had administered to the commissariat officer of Magdeburg, M. Chaalons, as it seems to me.

My literary ideal is found rather in connection with enjoying the works of others and estimating their worth, than with writing myself.

About 1794 I was foolishly awaiting the moment of

genius, somewhat like the voice of God speaking to Moses from the burning bush. This silliness made me lose a lot of time, but perhaps it prevented me from being content with the *semi-commonplace*, like so many writers of merit (for instance, M. Loïs Weymar).

When I begin to write, I think no more of my literary ideal; I am besieged by ideas which I feel the need to register. I suppose M. Villemain is besieged by forms of phrases; and what is called a poet—a Delille or a Racine—by forms of verse.

Corneille was troubled by forms of repartee:

*"Hé bien! prends-en ta part et me laisse la mienne"*⁴

(Emile to Cinna).

But since my idea of perfection has changed every six months, it is impossible for me to record what it was about 1795 or 1796, when I wrote a drama of which I have forgotten the name. The chief character was perhaps called M. Picklar, and was perhaps taken from Florian.

The only thing I can see clearly is that for forty-six years it has been my ideal to live in Paris, on a fourth story, writing a play or a book.

The endless meannesses and the worldly wisdom which are necessary in order to get a play acted have prevented me from writing any, much as I should have liked it; only a week ago I was filled with terrible remorse for this. I have sketched the plot of more than twenty, but always with too many details, and too profound, too unintelligible for the stupid public like M. Ternaux, whose revolution in 1789 filled the parterre and the boxes.

When, by his immortal pamphlet, *What Is the Third Estate? We Are on Our Knees: Let Us Arise*, the Abbé Sieyès struck the first blow at political aristocracy, he unconsciously founded the literary aristocracy. (This idea came to me in November 1835 while I was writing a preface to de Brosses which shocked Colomb.)

⁴ "So then, take thou thy part, but leave to me my own."



CHAPTER XXXII

I had, then, a certain principle of literary beauty in my head in 1796 or 1797, when I was attending M. Dubois-Fontanelle's classes; this principle was very different from his. The most decisive feature of this difference was my adoration for the tragic and simple truth of Shakespeare, in contrast with the puerile bombast of Voltaire.

I remember, among other things, that M. Dubois used to recite to us with enthusiasm certain verses of Voltaire's, or of his own, in which occurred the words "*dans la plaie . . . retournant le couteau.*"¹ This word *couteau* shocked me deeply, to the roots of my being, because it was bad application of my rule, my love of simplicity. I can see now the reason why; all my life I have felt things acutely, but I do not see the reason why till long afterward.

Only yesterday, the 18th of January 1836, on the feast of the *Cattedra*² at St. Peter's, on coming out of St. Peter's at four o'clock and turning round to look at the dome, *for the first time in my life* I looked at it as one looks at any other building; I saw the iron balcony of the drum and I said to myself: I can see for the first time what *is*; up to now I have looked at it as one looks at the woman one loves. Everything in it gave me pleasure (I am speaking of the drum and the cupola); how could I find faults in it?

¹ "In the wound . . . turning again the knife."

² *Cattedra*: this refers to the so-called Chair of Saint Peter, with its carved ivory decoration, which is kept in Saint Peter's at Rome and exhibited once a century.

And thus, by another road, from another side, I once more come back to the sight of that defect which I noted above, in this my veracious story—*my lack of sagacity*.

Good heavens! How I am wandering from the point! So, then, I had an inner doctrine when I was attending M. Dubois's lessons; I learned all that he told me only *as a useful falsehood*. When he found fault with Shakespeare, in particular, I used to blush internally.

But I learned this literary doctrine *all the better* for not being enthusiastic about it.

It has been one of my misfortunes not to be liked by the people for whom I had an enthusiasm (for example, Mme Pasta and M. de Tracy); apparently I loved them in my way, and not in theirs.

In the same way, I often fail in the exposition of a doctrine which I *adore*: I am contradicted, tears come into my eyes, and I cannot go on speaking. If I dared, I would say: "Ah! you cut me to the heart!" I remember two examples of this which struck me very much.

1. Praise of Correggio, while discussing Prud'hon. I was talking to Mareste in the Palais-Royal, and going to a picnic with MM. Duvergier de Hauranne, the amiable Dittmer, and the horrid Cavé.

The second time, I was talking about Mozart to MM. Ampère and Adrien de Jussieu, on the way back from Naples about 1832 (a month after the earthquake which damaged Foligno).

From the literary point of view, M. Dubois's course of lessons (since printed in four volumes by his grandson, Ch. Renauldon) was useful to me as giving me a complete survey of the field of literature, and preventing my imagination from exaggerating the parts which it did not know, such as Sophocles, Ossian, etc.

These lessons were very useful to my vanity, as it confirmed the others definitively in the opinion which placed me among the seven or eight clever boys in the school. It seems to me, however, that Grand-Dufay was

placed before me; I have forgotten the names of the others.

The golden age of M. Fontanelle, the time of which he used to speak with emotion, was that of his arrival in Paris about 1750. Everything was then full of the name of Voltaire and the works which he was constantly sending forth from Ferney. (Was he already at Ferney?)

All this failed of its effect on me, for I abhorred Voltaire's *puerility* in history, and his *base envy* of Corneille; it seems to me that as early as this I had noticed the priestly tone of Voltaire's *Commentary* in the fine edition of Corneille, with illustrations, which occupied one of the upper shelves of my father's glass-fronted bookcase at Claix, the key of which I used to steal; and where, it seems to me, I had discovered the *Nouvelle Héloïse* some years before, and certainly, later on, *Grandison*, which I read, with floods of tender tears, in a garret on the second floor of the house at Claix, where I thought myself in safety.

M. Jay, that great braggadocio, though insignificant as a painter, had a decided talent for arousing the most violent emulation in our hearts, and that is now, in my eyes, the chief talent in a master. How different were my ideas about 1796! I had a worship for genius and talent.

A fantastic, doing everything by fits and starts, which is the usual procedure of a man of genius, would not have had four hundred, or three hundred and fifty pupils, like M. Jay.

At any rate, the rue Neuve was crowded when we came out of our lesson, which redoubled the self-importance and pomposity of our professor's manner.

I was enchanted, as if I had gained the finest and most difficult promotion possible, when, about the middle of one year, M. Jay said to me, in his majestic and paternal manner:

"Come, Monsieur Beyle, take your sheet of cardboard.

and go and take up your place by the models in relief."

This word *Monsieur*, so generally used in Paris, was altogether unusual at Grenoble in addressing a child, and always astonished me when addressed to myself.

I do not know whether I owed this promotion to some remark which my grandfather had addressed to M. Jay, or to my skill in making nice parallel cross-hatchings in the "academy" class, to which I had been admitted some little time ago. The fact remains that it surprised me and the others.

Admitted among the twelve or fifteen *bosses* (drawings from the relief model), my drawings in black-and-white chalk from the heads of Niobe and Demothenes (so called by us) surprised M. Jay, who appeared scandalized at finding I had as much talent as the others. The best in this class was a M. Ennemond Hélié (afterward a notary in the Courts). He was a man with a very cold manner; they said he had been in the army. His works tended toward the style of Philippe de Champagne, but he was a man, not a child like the rest of us; it was unjust to let him compete with us.

I soon won a prize for drawing from the model. Two or three of us tried for it; we drew lots, and I got the Abbé Dubos's *Essay on Poetry and Painting*, which I read with the liveliest pleasure. I found in this book a response to the feelings of my heart—feelings unknown even to myself.

Moulezin, the ideal of a shy provincial, devoid of all ideas and very careful, excelled at drawing nice parallel cross-hatchings with a well-sharpened red crayon. A man of talent, in M. Jay's place, would have said to us, pointing at Moulezin: "Messieurs, that is the way *not* to draw." Instead of this, Moulezin was the rival of Ennemond Hélié.

The witty Dufay's drawings were very original, said M. Jay; he especially distinguished himself when M. Jay had the excellent idea of making us all sit as models,

in turn, for studying heads. We had also the big Hélie, nicknamed *le bedot* (the stupid, heavy fellow), and the two Monvals, whose favored position at mathematics had followed them to the drawing-school. We used to work for *two or three hours every afternoon* with an ardor and rivalry that would not be believed.

One day, when there were two models, the great Odru, of the Latin class, would not let me see; I boxed his ears as hard as I could, at O. A moment later, when I had regained my place at H, he pulled my chair backward and made me sit down hard on the floor. He was a man; he was a foot taller than I, but he simply hated me. I had drawn on the staircase leading to the Latin classroom, with the aid of Gauthier and Crozet, as it seems to me, a caricature as enormous as himself, under which I had written: "Odruas Kambin." He used to blush when we called him Odruas, and said *kambin* instead of *quand bien*.

It was decided on the spot that we must have a duel with pistols. We went down into the courtyard. M. Jay tried to interfere, but we ran away. M. Jay returned to the other classroom. We went out, but the whole college followed us. We had perhaps two hundred following us.

I had asked Diday, who had been present, to act as my second; I was very much agitated, but full of ardor. I do not know how it came about, but we turned off in the direction of the Porte de la Graille, greatly embarrassed by the procession which followed us. We had to have pistols, and that was not easy. In the end I obtained a pistol eight inches long. I saw Odru walking twenty feet away from me, heaping me with insults. They would not let us get near each other; he could have killed me with a blow of his fist.

I made no answer to his insults, but I was trembling with rage. I do not say that I should have been quite free from fear if the duel had been arranged in the ordinary manner—four or six people going coldly off

together in a cab, at six o'clock in the morning, a good league outside the town.

The guard at the Porte de la Graille was on the point of presenting arms.

Every time we stopped to do anything, this procession of little rascals, which was ridiculous and very embarrassing for us, redoubled its shouts of: "Are they going to fight or not?" I was very much afraid of being thrashed by Odru, who was a foot taller than his seconds and mine. I can remember as my second only Maurice Diday (afterward a commonplace Ultra, and mayor of Domène, writing badly spelled Ultra letters to the papers). Odru was furious.

At last, after pursuing us for an hour and a half, as night was falling, the little boys at last left us a little peace, between the Porte de Bonne and the Porte de Très-Cloîtres. We went down into the town fosse, designed by Louis Royer, a foot deep, or else we halted on the edge of this fosse.

There the pistols were loaded, and a terrible number of paces was measured—perhaps twenty; and I said to myself: "Now is the moment to be brave." I do not know how it happened, but Odru was to fire first. I looked fixedly at a little trapezium-shaped piece of rock which happened to be above me, the same one which could be seen from my Aunt Elisabeth's window, by the side of the roof of the Church of Saint-Louis.

I do not know how it happened, but the pistols did not go off. Probably the witnesses had not loaded them. It seems to me that I did not have to take aim. Peace was declared, but without shaking hands, still less embracing each other. Odru, who was very much enraged, would have liked to thrash me.

In the rue Très-Cloîtres, as I walked with my second, Diday, I said to him: "While Odru was aiming at me, I looked at the little rock above Seyssins, so as not to be afraid."

"You ought never to say that; such a word ought never to fall from your lips," he said to me, scolding me severely.

I was very much astonished and, when I thought it over, greatly scandalized at this reproof.

But on the day after, I was filled with horrible remorse at having allowed the matter to be patched up. It wounded all my Spanish dreams. How could I dare to admire the *Cid* after not fighting? How could I think about the heroes of Ariosto? How could I admire and criticize the great characters in Roman history, the great deeds of whom I read and re-read in the mawkish Rollin?

As I write this, I feel as if I were passing my hand over the scar of a wound which has healed.

I had not thought twice about this duel since my other duel which was patched up with M. Raindre (a major or colonel of light artillery at Vienna, in 1809, on account of Babet).

I see that it was the great mortification of all my early youth, and the real reason of my presumptuousness (almost amounting to insolence) in my duel at Milan, in which Cardon was my second.

In this Odru affair I was confused and agitated, and let myself be guided by others; my attention was distracted by the fear of being thrashed by the giant Odru, and from time to time I expected to be afraid. During the two hours that the procession of two hundred school-boys lasted, I kept saying to myself: "When they have measured the paces, it is then that there will be danger." What horrified me was the idea of being carried home *on a ladder*, as I had seen poor Lambert. But I had not for a second the remotest idea that the affair might be patched up.

When the great moment arrived, while Odru was aiming at me, and, as it seems to me, his pistol kept missing fire, I studied the outline of the little rock. The time did not seem long (as it seemed long, at the Mos-

kowa, to that most brave and excellent officer, my friend Andrea Corner).

In a word, I did not act a part; I was perfectly natural, not in the least a braggart, but very brave.

I was wrong; I ought to have talked big. That, with my genuine determination to fight, would have made me a reputation in our town, where duels were frequent; not as they are among the Neapolitans in 1836, where they result in very few corpses or none at all, but as among honorable men. In contrast with my extreme youth (this must have been in 1796, making me thirteen, or perhaps in 1795) and my retiring habits, like a *child of the nobility*, if I had been clever enough to talk a little I should have made an admirable reputation.

M. Châtel, an acquaintance of ours and a neighbor in the Grande-rue, had killed six men. In my day—I mean between 1798 and 1805—two of my acquaintances, young Bernard and “Beaky” Royer (*Gros-bec*), were killed in duels, M. Royer at forty-two paces, at nightfall, in the waste lands of the Drac, near the point at which the cable bridge was afterward constructed.

That conceited fop Bernard (the son of another conceited fop, afterward a judge in the Court of Cassation, as it seems to me, and an Ultra), that conceited fop Bernard received a little rapier wound at the mill of Canel from the amiable Meffrey (M. de Meffrey, the receiver-general, the husband of the Duchesse de Berry’s complaisant lady-in-waiting, and afterward the lucky heir of the big Vourey). Bernard fell down dead, and M. de Meffrey fled to Lyons; the quarrel had been almost a question of caste. Mareste was a second of Meffrey, it seems to me, and told me about the affair.

However that may be, I was left in a state of deep remorse:

1. Because of my “Castilianism,” a defect still existing in 1830, which Fiore recognized when he said, quoting Thucydides: “You spread your nets too high.”

2. Because of my failure to make a telling speech. In

great dangers, I am natural and simple. This was in good taste at Smolensk, in the eyes of the Duke of Friuli. M. Daru, who did not like me, wrote the same thing to his wife, from Vilna, I think, after the retreat from Moscow. But in the eyes of the vulgar I did not play that brilliant part which I had only to hold out my hand to obtain.

The more I think of it, the more it appears to me that this quarrel was in 1795, long before my passion for mathematics, my friendship for Bigillion, and my tender friendship for Mlle Victorine.

I had a boundless respect for Maurice Diday:

1. Because my excellent grandfather, who was a friend—perhaps an intimate friend—of his mother's, used to praise him highly;

2. I had seen him several times in the uniform of a soldier in the artillery and he had gone to join his corps on the other side of Montmélian;

3. Finally, and most important of all, he had the honor of being in love with Mlle Létourneau, perhaps the prettiest girl in Grenoble, and daughter of the man who was certainly the gayest and most lighthearted person in the town, besides being the greatest Voltairian and most severely condemned by my father and my relations. Indeed, M. Létourneau had not much resemblance to them; he had more or less ruined himself, and married a Mlle Borel, I think, a sister of the mother of Victorine Mounier, who was the cause of my abandoning a military career, and of my flight to Paris in 1803.

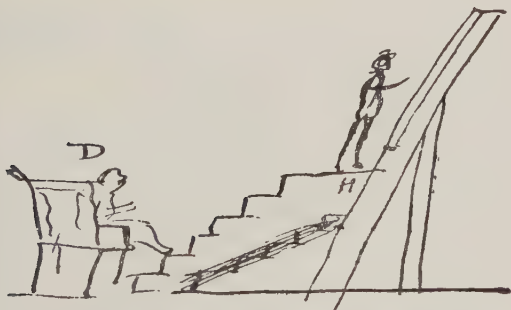
Mlle Létourneau was a beauty in the heavy style (like the figures by Tiarini, *The Death of Cleopatra and Antony*, in the Louvre). Diday afterward married her, but had soon the grief of losing her after six years of love; they say that he was crushed by it, and retired to the country, at Domène.

After my prize for drawing from the antique, in the middle of the year, which scandalized all those who

were more active courtiers of M. Jay than I, but which nobody dared to say I did not deserve, my position "at drawing" (as we used to say) was changed. I would have gone through fire to win another prize at the end of the year. It seems to me that I won it; if not, I should find some recollection of my grief at missing it.

I won the first prize for literature, by acclamation; I had an honorable mention or a second prize in mathematics, and this was hard to win. M. Dupuy had a strong dislike for my mania for argumentation.

He used to call up every day to the blackboard the MM. de Monval—or the Monvaux, as we called them—and call them *tu*, because they were noble, and he too had pretensions to nobility; also Sinard, and Saint-Ferréol, who were noble, the good Aribert, who was his protégé, the good-natured Mante, etc., etc., but me as rarely as he could; and when I was up there, he never listened to me, which used to humiliate and disconcert me very much, for he never took his eyes off the others. In spite of this, my love of mathematics, which was beginning to be serious, was such that when I came across



Drawing by Stendhal from his original manuscript

a difficulty, I used to expound it to him, I being at the blackboard H and M. Dupuy in his enormous sky-blue armchair at D; my indiscretion forced him to answer,

and that was the very devil. He constantly asked me to explain my doubts to him in private, alleging that it wasted the time of the class.

He instructed the good Sinard to explain my difficulties. Sinard, who was much cleverer, but sincere, used to spend an hour or two denying that there was any difficulty; at last he would understand it, and ended by confessing that he did not know what answer to give.

It seems to me that all these good people, with the exception of Mante, turned mathematics into a mere matter of memory. M. Dupuy seemed very much put out at my triumphantly winning the first prize in the literature class. My examination, which took place, like all the others, in the presence of the members of the department, the members of the jury, all the masters, and two or three hundred pupils, was amusing for those gentlemen. I spoke well, and the members of the departmental administration, astonished at not having been bored, complimented me and, when my examination was finished, said to me: "M. Beyle, you have won the prize; but, to please us, be so kind as to answer a few more questions."

This triumph came, I think, before the examination in mathematics, and gave me a position and assurance which forced M. Dupuy to call me to the blackboard frequently during the following year.

If ever I am passing through Grenoble again, I must have research made in the archives of the Prefecture for the years 1794 to 1799 inclusive. The printed account of the distribution of prizes would give me the date of all these little events, the memory of which comes back to me with such pleasure after all these years. I was on the ascending slope of life, and with what an ardent imagination used I not to call up before me the image of the pleasure to come? I am now on the downward grade.

After this triumphant month of August, my father no

longer dared to offer such a firm resistance to my passion for hunting. He let me take his rifle, with a bad grace, and even a heavier regulation army rifle, which had been made to order for M. Rey the notary, his late brother-in-law.

My Aunt Rey was a pretty woman, whom I used to go and see in her pretty apartment in the courtyard of the Palace. My father did not wish me to make friends with Édouard Rey, his second son, an ungodly little rascal who was friendly with the most disreputable boys. (He is today a colonel of artillery, a regular Dauphiné type, more cunning and false in himself alone than four attorneys of Grenoble; an arch-cuckold, moreover, not very amiable, but he must be a good colonel in that branch which is so much occupied with details. It seems to me that in 1831 he was serving in Algiers. He was the lover of M. P.)



CHAPTER XXXIII

As I write these Memoirs, I make great discoveries about myself. My difficulty now is not to discover and tell the truth, but to find somebody to read it. Perhaps the pleasure of these discoveries, and of the judgments or appreciations which follow them, will decide me to continue; the idea of being read is gradually disappearing. Here I am at page 501, and have not yet left Grenoble!

This picture of the revolutions of a heart would make a big octavo volume before I arrive at Milan. Who would read such insipid trifles? What a talent an artist would need to paint them well!—and I abhor almost equally the descriptions of Walter Scott and the bombast of Rousseau. I ought to have Mme Roland for a reader, and even then the absence of a description of the charming leafy shade in our valley of the Isère would make her throw down the book. How much there would be to say, for anyone who had the patience to give a just description! What fine groups of trees, what vigorous, luxuriant vegetation in the plains, what beautiful chestnut woods on the hillsides, and, on high, what an impression of grandeur is added to it all by the eternal snows of Taillefer! What a sublime bass it makes to this charming melody!

It was that autumn, I think, that I had the delightful pleasure of killing a thrush, in the path leading to the vineyard above the big enclosure, immediately opposite the rounded white summit of the mountain Taillefer. It was one of the acutest pleasures in my life. I had been wandering through the vineyards of Doyatières, and

was just entering a narrow path between two high, leafy hedges, from H to P, when all of a sudden a big thrush shot out with a little cry from the vine at T' right up to the top of the tree T, a cherry tree, I think, which was very tall and rather bare of leaves.

I saw it, I shot almost in a horizontal position, for I had not yet gone down into the path. The thrush fell to the ground with a thud that I can hear now. I came down the path intoxicated with joy.

I returned home, and went and said to a surly old manservant of ours, who was something of a shot:

"Barbier, your pupil is worthy of you!"

This man would have been much more impressed if I had presented him with a twelve-*sou* piece; and, besides, he did not understand a word I said to him.

Whenever I am moved, I fall into that "Castilianism" with which I was infected by my Aunt Elisabeth, who used still to say: "As fine as the *Cid*."

I used to dream deep dreams as I wandered, rifle in hand, round the vineyards and vine-clad maple plantations that surrounded Furonières. Since my father, who always took care to thwart me, forbade me to hunt, or at most tolerated it very unwillingly out of weakness, I rarely hunted, and hardly ever went with the real huntsmen; only occasionally I hunted the fox among the precipices of the rock of Comboire with Joseph Brun, who used to clip our maples, up which vines were trained. There, posted in waiting for a fox, I used to scold myself for my deep reverie, from which I should have had to rouse myself if the animal had appeared. He appeared one day fifteen paces away from me, coming toward me at a gentle trot. I shot, but saw nothing; I missed him completely. The dangers of the precipices, which fell perpendicularly down to the Drac, were so terrible to me that I thought a great deal that day about the perils of my return; one has to slip along ledges like A and B, looking down upon the Drac roaring at the

foot of the rock. The peasants with whom I went (Joseph Brun and his son, Sébastien Charrière, etc.) had kept their flocks of sheep on these steep slopes, barefooted, from the age of six; in case of need they would take off their shoes. As for me, there could be no question of taking off mine, and I went among these rocks only twice or three times at the outside.

I was thoroughly frightened on the day I missed the fox, much more so than the time when I stopped in a hempfield in Silesia (during the campaign of 1813) and saw eighteen or twenty Cossacks coming toward me, all alone as I was. That day at Comboire I was looking at my watch, which was a gold one, as I do on great occasions, so as to have at least a clear recollection of the time, as M. de la Valette did at the moment when he was condemned to death (by the Bourbons). It was eight o'clock; I had been made to get up before day-break, which always makes me dull all the morning. I was musing on the beautiful landscape, on love, and perhaps, too, on the dangers of my return, when the fox came trotting toward me. His great tail made me recognize him for a fox, for at the first glance I took him for a dog. At S the path might have been two feet wide, and at S' two inches; the fox had to take a jump to get from S' to H, and when I fired he jumped over some bushes at B, five or six feet above us.

Passable tracks, which can be negotiated even by a fox, are few in number on this precipice; three or four huntsmen guard them, another looses the dogs, the fox runs up, and very probably he comes upon one of the huntsmen.

A hunt of which they used constantly to talk was chamois-hunting on the plateau called the *Peuil de Claix*; but my father had strictly forbidden it, and none of them ever dared to take me there. It was in 1795, I think, that I had this fine panic among the rocks of Comboire.

I soon killed my second thrush, a smaller one than the first, at nightfall, when I could hardly make it out, on a walnut tree in M. de la Peyrouse's field, I think, above our *Pelissone* (i.e., our vineyard called Pelissone).

I killed the third and last on a little walnut tree at the edge of a road to the north of our little orchard. This thrush was tiny; it was almost vertically above me and fell almost on my nose. It fell on a wall of loose stones, with great drops of blood that I can still see.

This blood was a sign of victory. It was not till I was at Brunswick, in 1808, that pity gave me a distaste for hunting; nowadays it seems to me to be an inhuman and disgusting form of murder, and I would not kill a gnat without necessity. However, I was not sorry for the last quail I killed at Civit -Vecchia. Partridges, quails, and hares seem to me like chickens, born to be roasted on the spit.

If they were consulted before coming into the world in the Egyptian incubators, at the end of the Champs- lys es, they would probably not refuse.

I remember the delightful sensation, one morning, of starting with Barbier before dawn, and finding a beautiful moon and a warm breeze. It was in vintage time, and I have never forgotten it. That day I had extorted from my father permission to accompany Barbier, the general factotum who looked after the agricultural operations of our demesne, to a fair at Sassenage or Les Balmes. Sassenage is the cradle of my family. They were judges, or *beyles*, and in 1795 the *elder branch* was still settled there with an income of fifteen or twenty thousand francs, which, if it had not been for a certain law of the 13th Germinal, it seems to me, would have come to me *in full*. My patriotism was not shaken by this; it is true that, not knowing the meaning of *want*, and what it is to do unpleasant work in order to earn the necessities of life, money meant no more to me than the satisfaction of my fancies. Now I had no fancies, for I never went into society

and saw *no women*; money, then, was nothing in my eyes.

At that time I was like a great river, about to plunge down a cascade, like the Rhine above Schaffhausen, where its course is still tranquil but is about to rush down in an immense waterfall. My cascade was the love of mathematics, which absorbed everything, at the beginning, because it was a means of leaving Grenoble, that personification of all that was bourgeois and literally of *nausea*; afterward it absorbed everything because of my love for it in itself.

Hunting, which led me to read with emotion the *Maison rustique* and to make extracts from Buffon's *History of Animals*, the pompous style of which shocked me, even at that tender age, as being a cousin german of the hypocrisy of priests and of my father—hunting was the first sign that my soul was alive, before mathematics.

I went indeed as often as I could to see Mlle Victorine Bigillion, but it seems to me that she stayed in the country for long periods at a time during those years. I also saw a great deal of Bigillion, her elder brother, of La Bayette, Galle, Barral, Michoud, Colomb, and Mante, but my heart was with mathematics.

One more story, and then I shall bristle with *x*'s and *y*'s.

It is about a conspiracy against the tree of Fraternity.

I do not know why I conspired. This tree was a hapless young oak—very tall, at least thirty feet high—which had been transplanted, to its great regret, into the middle of the Place Grenette, very much this side of the tree of Liberty, on which all my tenderness was lavished.

The tree of Fraternity, perhaps a rival of the other, had been planted immediately against the chestnut stall, opposite the windows of the late M. Le Roy.

On some occasion which I cannot remember, a white

signboard had been attached to the tree of Fraternity, on which M. Jay had painted in yellow, with his usual talent, a crown, a scepter, and chains, all this surmounted by an inscription, and lying like conquered things.

The inscription was in several lines and I have no memory of what it was, although it was what I conspired against.

This is an excellent proof of the principle that a little passion increases the intelligence, but a great deal stifles it. Against what were we conspiring? I do not know. I have only a vague remembrance left of our maxim: it is our duty to injure to the best of our ability what we hate. And even this is very vague. Moreover, I have not the least recollection of what we hated, or the reasons for our hatred, only the picture of what happened, and that is all; but this much is clear.

I alone conceived the idea of the deed; I had to communicate it to the others, who were cold at first: "The guardroom is so near!" they said; but in the end they were as resolute as I was. The conspirators were Mante, Treillard, Colomb, and I, with perhaps one or two more.

Why did I not fire the pistol shot? I do not know. It seems to me that it was Treillard or Mante.

That pistol had to be procured; it was eight inches long. We loaded it up to the muzzle. The tree of Fraternity may have been thirty-six or forty feet high; the signboard was fastened to it at a height of ten or twelve feet; it seems to me that there was a railing round the tree.

Danger might come from the guardroom C, the soldiers from which used to walk up and down in the unpaved space from P to P'.

A few passers-by coming from the rue Montorge or the Grande-rue might stop us. The four or five of us who were not to shoot kept watch on the soldiers in the guardroom; perhaps that was my post, as being the most

dangerous, but I have no remembrance of this. Others kept a look-out on the rue Montorge and the Grande-rue.

About eight o'clock at night—it was pitch-dark and not too cold; it was in the autumn or the spring—there was a moment when the square was deserted. We walked about calmly, and gave the word to Mante or Treillard.

The shot was fired and made a terrible noise; there was absolute silence and the pistol was loaded to bursting-point. In an instant the soldiers of the guard were upon us. I think that we were not alone in hating the inscription and they thought it might be attacked.

The soldiers were almost touching us. We escaped into the door G of my grandfather's house, but they saw us perfectly well. Everybody was at his window; many were bringing up candles and lighting up the scene.

This door at G, on the Place Grenette, was connected by a narrow passage on the second story with the door G' on the Grande-rue. But everybody knew about this.

In order to escape, then, we followed the line FFF. A few of us escaped, too, it seems to me, through the great door of the Jacobins, which leads me to believe that there were more of us than I said. Prié was perhaps one of the party.

I and another, perhaps Colomb, were those who were most hotly pursued. "They went into that house!" we heard them shouting quite near to us.

We did not go right upstairs to the passage above the second story; we rang sharply at the first-floor apartment on the Place Grenette, formerly my grandfather's apartment but at that time let to the Mlles Caudey, two very pious old milliners. Luckily they opened the door; we found them very much frightened by the pistol shot, and engaged in reading the Bible.

In two words we said to them: "They are after us; say that we have spent the evening here." We sat down.

Almost at the same moment there was a ring hard enough to break the bell. As for us, we were sitting listening to the Bible-reading; I even think that one of us had taken the book!

The commissaries entered. Who they were, I do not know in the least; I did not look at them very much, it would seem.

"These citizens have passed the evening here?"

"Yes, Messieurs; yes, citizens," said the poor, frightened, pious women, correcting themselves. I believe their brother, M. Caudey, an old clerk who had been employed at the hospital for forty-five years, was with them.

These commissaries, or zealous citizens, must have been very dense, or else very well disposed toward M. Gagnon, who was venerated by the whole town, from the Baron des Adrets down to Poulet, who kept a low eating-house; for our agitation must have made us cut a strange figure in the midst of these poor pious women who were beside themselves with fright. Perhaps this fear, which was as great as ours, saved us; the whole party must have had the same scared look.

The commissaries repeated their question two or three times: "Have the citizens passed all the evening here? Nobody has come in since you heard the pistol shot?"

The miraculous part of it, which we thought of afterward, was that these old Jansenists should have been ready to lie. I believe they gave way to this sin out of veneration for my grandfather.

The commissaries took our names, and at last cleared out.

No compliments were wasted between us and these old maids. We listened with all our ears; and when we could no longer hear the commissaries, we went out, and went on upstairs to the passage.

Mante and Treillard, who were more active than we were and had entered the door at G before us, told us, the day after, that when they reached the door G' on

the Grande-rue they found it occupied by two guards. They began to say how charming the young ladies were with whom they had spent the evening; the guards did not put any questions to them, and they made off.

Their story made such an impression of reality on me that I could not be sure it was not Colomb and I who went out talking about the charming ladies.

It would seem more likely that Colomb and I went into the house, and that he went away half an hour after.

What was amusing were the squabbles in which my father and my Aunt Elisabeth indulged as to the supposed authors of the revolt. It seems to me that I told my sister Pauline, who was my friend, all about it.

The next day, at the Central School, Monval (afterward a colonel, and looked down upon), who did not like me, said:

"Well! So you and your friends have had a shot at the tree of Fraternity!"

The delightful thing was to go and look at the state of the signboard: it was riddled with shot.

The scepters, crowns, and other *conquered* attributes were painted on the south side, looking toward the tree of Liberty. The crowns, etc., were painted in pale yellow on paper stretched over canvas, or else on a canvas prepared for painting in oils.

I had not thought of this affair for fifteen or twenty years. I must confess that I think it very fine. I used often to repeat to myself, with enthusiasm, at that time, and I again repeated, not four days ago, this line from *Horace*:

*Albe vous a nommé, je ne vous connais plus!*¹

This deed was quite in harmony with such admiration.

¹ Alba has chosen you; I no longer recognize you.

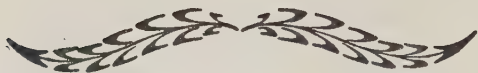
The singular thing is that I did not fire the pistol myself; but I do not think it was out of a reprehensible prudence. It seems to me, but I have an uncertain half-impression, seen as if through a fog, that Treillard, who had just arrived from his village (Tullins, I think), was set upon firing off the pistol so as to gain citizen rights among us.

As I write this, the image of the tree of Fraternity rises up before my eyes, and my memory makes discoveries. I seem to see that the tree of Fraternity was surrounded by a wall two feet high, ornamented with freestone and topped by an iron railing five or six feet high.

Jomard was a rascally priest, like Ming in later days, who was guillotined for poisoning his stepfather, a M. Martin of Vienne, as it seems to me, a retired "member of the Department," as they used to be called. I saw the scoundrel condemned, and afterward guillotined. I was on the pavement, before M. Plana the chemist's shop.

Jomard had let his beard grow; as a parricide, he had his shoulders draped with a red cloth.

I was so near that after the execution I saw the drops of blood forming all along the knife and then falling! This horrified me, and for I do not know how many days I could not eat boiled beef.



CHAPTER XXXIV

I believe I have disposed of all I wanted to talk about before starting on the last account of Grenoble affairs which I shall have to give. I mean my plunge into mathematics.

Mlle Kably had been gone for a long time, and nothing remained of her to me but a tender memory; Mlle Victorine Bigillion was a great deal in the country; my only pleasure in reading was Shakespeare and the *Memoirs* of Saint-Simon, then in seven volumes, which I bought later in twelve volumes, with the *Characters* of (¹), a passion which has lasted as long at that I have for spinach, in the physical sphere, and is at least as strong at the age of fifty-three as it was at thirteen.

I became all the fonder of mathematics as I came to despise my masters, MM. Dupuy and Chabert, more. In spite of the pompous expressions and fine manners, the noble, gentle air which M. Dupuy had in addressing anyone, I had enough penetration to guess that he was infinitely more illiterate than M. Chabert. M. Chabert, who in the social hierarchy of the middle classes of Grenoble occupied a place so much below M. Dupuy, sometimes used to take a volume of Euler or (¹) on a Sunday or Thursday morning and have a good wrestle with the difficulties. All the same, he was always like an apothecary who knows a few good recipes; but there was nothing to show how these recipes arose one out of the other. There was no logic, no philosophy in his head; by some unknown mechanism of education or vanity, perhaps

¹ Words illegible in original French.

for religious reasons, the good M. Chabert hated the very names of these things.

With my intelligence of today, I was unjust enough, two minutes ago, to be astonished at not having seen the remedy on the spot. I had nobody to help me; my grandfather, out of vanity, had a dislike for mathematics, which formed the only limitation to his almost universal erudition. "That man" (or, rather, "M. Gagnon") "has never forgotten anything of what he has read," as they used to say respectfully at Grenoble. Mathematics were the sole rejoinder of his enemies. My father abhorred mathematics, for religious reasons, I think, and forgave them a little only because they teach us how to survey estates. I was always making him copies of the plan of his property at Claix, Echerolles, Fontagnier, and Le Chayla (a valley near —), where he had just done a good stroke of business.

I despised Bezout as much as I did MM. Dupuy and Chabert.

It is true that there were five or six at the Central School who were good at mathematics, and passed the entrance examination for the *École polytechnique* in 1797 or 1798; but they would not condescend to answer my difficulties, perhaps because I did not explain them very clearly, or rather, perhaps, because they were embarrassed by them.

I bought, or received as prizes, the works of the Abbé Marie, in one octavo volume. I read this volume as eagerly as a novel. In it I found truths expounded in different terms, which gave me great pleasure and repaid me for my trouble; but beyond that, I found nothing new.

I do not mean to say that there was nothing new; perhaps I did not understand it, or was not sufficiently well educated to see it.

In order to meditate in greater quiet, I had settled down in the drawing-room, furnished with a dozen fine

armchairs embroidered by my poor mother, and opened only once or twice in the year to remove the dust. This room produced in me a contemplative frame of mind. I had still, at that time, the memory of the charming suppers given by my mother. They used to leave this drawing-room, all glittering with lights, and, as it struck ten o'clock, pass into the fine dining-room, where there was an enormous fish. This was my father's great luxury; he still had this instinct, even in the state of exaggerated piety and agricultural speculation to which I saw him reduced.

It was on the table T that I had written the first act or the five acts of my drama, which I called a comedy, while waiting for the moment of genius, as if an angel were to have appeared to me.

My enthusiasm for mathematics had perhaps had as its principal basis my horror of hypocrisy; hypocrisy, in my eyes, meant my Aunt Séraphie, Mme Vignon, and their priests.

In my opinion, hypocrisy was impossible in mathematics, and in my youthful simplicity I thought it was also the case in all sciences to which I had heard they were applied. What were not my feelings when I perceived that nobody could explain to me how it came about that minus multiplied by minus gives plus ($- \times - = +$)? (This is one of the fundamental bases of the science called *algebra*.)

They did worse than fail to explain this difficulty (which is doubtless explicable, for it leads to truth): they explained it to me by reasoning which was obviously not very clear to those who gave it.

M. Chabert, when I pressed him, got confused, repeated his *lesson*, the identical one against which I was advancing objections, and ended by saying to me, in effect:

"But it is the custom; everybody admits this explanation. Euler and Lagrange, who were presumably as good

as you, admitted it. We know that you are very clever (this meant: We know you have carried off a first prize for *literature* and spoken well before M. *Tortelebeau* and the other members of the Department); apparently you wish to be different from everyone else."

As for M. Dupuy, he received my timid objections (timid because of his pompous way of speaking) with a smile of contempt that bordered on aversion. Although he was less clever than M. Chabert, he was less middle-class, less narrow, and had perhaps a just opinion of his own mathematical capacity. If I could see these gentlemen for a week now, I should know what to think about them. But I have to keep returning to the following point:

Brought up as if under a glass bell by my relations, whose misery increased their narrow-mindedness, and separated as I was from all contact with men, at the age of fifteen I received vivid impressions, but I was much less capable than another child of judging men and seeing through the various parts which they acted. And so I have not, at heart, much confidence in all the judgments with which I have filled the 536 previous pages. Nothing is absolutely true but sensations; only to arrive at the truth I must add four sharps to my impressions. I interpret them with the coolness and deadening of the senses produced by the experience of a man of forty.

I distinctly remember that when I spoke of my difficulty about "minus multiplied by minus" to one of the clever ones, he would laugh in my face; they were all more or less like Paul-Émile Teisseire, and used to learn by heart. I often heard them say, at the blackboard, at the end of their demonstration:

"And so it is evident that," etc.

"Nothing is less evident to you," I used to think. But, for my part, I was dealing with things that were evident, and which, with the best will in the world, it was impossible to doubt.

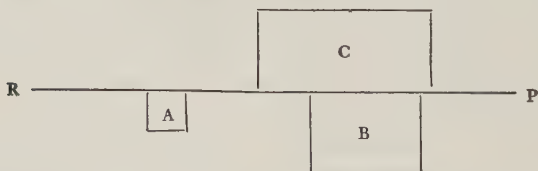
Mathematics only deals with a small corner of things (their quantity), but on this point it has the advantage of saying nothing but what is certain, the truth, and almost the whole truth.

At the age of fourteen, in 1797, I used to imagine that the higher mathematics, those that I have never known, dealt with *all* or almost all sides of things, and that in this way, as I proceeded, I should arrive at a knowledge of things, sure and indubitable and demonstrable at will, *about everything*.

It took me a long time to convince myself that my objection about "minus multiplied by minus gives plus" was absolutely incapable of entering the head of M. Chabert, that M. Dupuy would never answer it except by a superior smile, and that the clever boys whom I asked questions would always make fun of me.

I was reduced to saying what I still say to myself to-day: it must be true that minus multiplied by minus gives plus, for it is evident that by constantly employing this rule in calculations, one arrives at *true and indubitable* results.

My great trouble was this figure:



Supposing that RP is the line separating the positive from the negative, everything above it being positive, and everything below it negative: how, by taking the square B as often as there are units in square A, can I manage to make the square C change sides?

And, to follow a clumsy comparison, which M. Chabert's excessively drawling Grenoble accent made even

more clumsy, supposing that the negative quantities are a man's debts: how, by multiplying 10,000 francs of debts by 500 francs, can this man have, and will he arrive at having, a fortune of five millions?

Are M. Dupuy and M. Chabert hypocrites, like the priests who come and say Mass at my grandfather's house, and is my beloved mathematics nothing but an imposture? I did not know how to arrive at the truth. Ah! how greedily I should have listened then to any word about logic, or the art of *finding the truth*! What a moment to explain to me the *Logic* of M. de Tracy! Perhaps I should have been a better man; I should have had a far better head.

I concluded, by the aid of my poor little resources, that M. Dupuy might be an impostor, but that M. Chabert was a vain bourgeois who could not understand the existence of any objections which he did not see.

My father and my grandfather had Diderot and D'Alembert's folio *Encyclopædia*; it is, or rather it was, a work costing seven or eight hundred francs. It takes a tremendous influence to persuade a provincial to invest such a big capital in books, from which I now conclude that before my birth my father and grandfather must have belonged entirely to the philosophical party.

My father could not see me turning over the *Encyclopædia* without sorrow. I had the most entire confidence in this book, because of my father's aversion from it and the marked hatred which it inspired in the priests who used to come to the house. Canon Rey, the Vicar-General, a great papier-mâché figure five feet ten high, used to make a queer grimace when he pronounced wryly the names of Diderot and D'Alembert. This grimace gave me a deep and secret pleasure. I am still very much open to pleasure of this sort. I used sometimes to enjoy it in 1815 when I heard the nobility refusing to grant that Nicolas Bonaparte, for such was this great man's name at that time, had any courage; and yet from 1807

onward I had longed passionately for him to fail to conquer England; or where could one have taken refuge then?

I tried, then, to consult D'Alembert's mathematical articles in the *Encyclopædia*; their conceited tone and lack of reverence for truth shocked me greatly, and, besides, I understood but little of them. With what ardor I adored the truth at that time! How sincerely I believed her to be the queen of the world which I was about to enter! I did not see that she had any other enemies besides the priests.

If "minus multiplied by minus gives plus" had caused me so much grief, you can imagine what black despair seized upon my soul when I began the *Statics* of Louis Monge, the brother of the famous Monge, who was soon to come and conduct the examinations for the *École polytechnique*.

At the beginning of the geometry book, it says: "The name of parallels is given to two lines which would never meet if produced to infinity." And, at the very beginning of the *Statics*, that egregious animal Louis Monge has written roughly as follows: "Two parallel lines can be considered as meeting, if they are produced to infinity."

I thought I was reading a catechism, and one of the clumsiest, at that. It was in vain that I asked M. Chabert for an explanation.

"My child," he said, putting on that paternal manner which is so ill-suited to the foxes of Dauphiné—the manner of Édouard Mounier (a peer of France, in 1836)—"my child, you will know later."

And the monster, going up to his oilcloth blackboard and drawing two parallel lines very close together, said:

"You see quite well that one may say they meet at infinity." I almost gave it all up. A hypocrite, a good, clever Jesuit, could have converted me at that moment by commenting on this maxim:

"You see that all is error, or rather that there is nothing false, nothing true. Everything is a convention; adopt the convention which will bring you the best reception in society. Now the mob is patriotic, and will always befoul that party; become an aristocrat, then, like your parents, and we will find a way of sending you to Paris with introductions to some influential ladies."



CHAPTER XXXV

If this had been said in such a way as to influence me, I should have become a rogue, and I should now have a great fortune.

My idea of the world, at the age of thirteen, was drawn solely from the *Secret Memoirs* of Duclos and Saint-Simon's *Memoirs* in seven volumes. Supreme happiness was to live in Paris, writing books, with an income of a hundred louis. Marion told me that my father would leave me much more.

It seems to me that I said to myself: "True or false, mathematics will get me out of Grenoble, out of that slough which makes me sick."

But I find this reasoning very advanced for my age. I continued to work; it would have been a great grief to leave off, but I was profoundly anxious and depressed.

At last, chance willed it that I should see a great man and that I should not become a rogue. Here, for the second time, the *subject is too much for the narrator*. I will try not to exaggerate.

In the midst of my adoration for mathematics, I had for some time past heard accounts of a young man, a thorough Jacobin, a fine intrepid huntsman, who knew mathematics much better than MM. Dupuy and Chabert, but did not make them his profession. Only, since he was by no means rich, he had given lessons to Anglès, that shallow pretender to intelligence (afterward a Count and Prefect of Police, enriched by Louis XVIII at the time of the loans).

But I was timid; how was I to approach him? And, besides, his lessons were horribly expensive, twelve *sous* a lesson. How was I to pay for them? (This price strikes me as too absurd; it was perhaps twenty-four or forty *sous*.)

I related all this, out of the fullness of my heart, to my Aunt Elisabeth, who was perhaps eighty years old then, but her excellent heart and still more excellent head (if that is possible) were only thirty. She generously gave me a quantity of *écus* of six francs. But it was not the money which cost her so much; her soul was full of the most scrupulous and delicate pride: I should have to take these lessons *without the knowledge of my father*; was she not exposing herself to justifiable reproach?

Was Séraphie still alive? I would not answer for it that she was not. And yet I was quite a child at the death of my Aunt Séraphie, for when I heard of her death, in the kitchen, opposite Marion's cupboard, I threw myself on my knees to thank God for such a great deliverance.

This event, these *écus* given so nobly by my Aunt Elisabeth to enable me to take lessons in secret from this terrible Jacobin, prevented me forever from becoming a rogue. To see a man on the model of the Greeks and Romans, and to wish to die rather than not be like him, though it were but for a moment, a *punto* ("*Non sia che un punto*"¹ [Alfieri]).

Timid as I was, I do not know how I approached M. Gros. (The fresco has fallen away at this point, and I should be nothing but a dull romance-writer, like Don Ruggiero Caetani, if I attempted to supply the deficiency. An illusion to the frescoes of the Campo Santo at Pisa, and their present condition.)

Without knowing how I got there, I see myself in the little room which Gros occupied at Saint-Laurent, the

¹ "Though it be but for a moment."

oldest and poorest quarter of the town. It is a long, narrow street, squeezed in between the mountain and the river. I did not enter this room alone, but who was the companion of my studies? Was it Cheminade? On that point my oblivion is complete; all my soul was apparently concentrated upon Gros. (This great man died so long ago that I think I may deprive him of the "Monsieur.")

He was a young man of a deep-blond complexion, very active, but very fat. He might have been twenty-five or twenty-six. His hair was extremely curly and fairly long, he was dressed in a long coat, and said to us:

"Citizens, where are we to begin? I ought to know what you know already."

"We know equations of the second degree."

And, like a sensible man, he began to explain these equations to us; that is to say, the formation of the square of $a + b$, for instance, which he made us raise to the second power: $a^2 + 2ab + b^2$; the supposition that the first member of the equation was the beginning of the square, the complement of this square, etc.

It was as if the heavens were opening for us, or at least for me. I at last saw the reason for things; it was no longer an apothecary's recipe for solving equations, fallen from the sky.

I found an acute pleasure in it, like that of reading an exciting novel. It must be admitted that what Gros told us about equations of the second degree was all, more or less, in the groveling Bezout, but our eyes could not condescend to see it there. It was set forth so dully that I could not take the trouble to pay attention to it.

At the third or fourth lesson, we passed to equations of the third degree, and there Gros was entirely original. It seems to me that he transported us straight to the frontier of science, face to face with the difficulty to be conquered, or before the veil which had to be lifted. For example, he showed us one after the other the various methods of solving equations of the third degree, what

Cardano's² first attempts had been; then, perhaps, what progress had been made; and, finally, the modern method.

We were greatly astonished that he did not make us prove the same proposition one after the other. As soon as we had quite understood a thing, he went on to something else.

Without being in the least a charlatan, Gros produced an effect due to a quality which is as useful in a professor as it is in a general; he filled my whole soul. I adored and respected him so much that I was perhaps unpleasing to him. I have had this unpleasant and surprising experience so often that it is perhaps by an error of memory that I attribute it to the first of my passionate admirations. I was disliked by M. de Tracy and Mme Pasta because I admired them too enthusiastically.

One day when there was great news, we talked politics for the whole lesson, and at the end he would not take our money. I was so accustomed to the sordid nature of the professors of Dauphiné, MM. Chabert, Durand, etc., that this very simple trait of his character redoubled my admiration and enthusiasm. It seems to me that on this occasion there were three of us, perhaps Cheminade, Félix Faure, and I, and it seems to me that we were each putting a twelve-*sou* piece on the little table A.

I can remember hardly anything for the two last years, 1798 and 1799. My passion for mathematics so absorbed my time that Félix Faure has told me I used to wear my hair too long, I so grudged the half-hour that I had to waste in getting it cut.



² Cardano: (1501-1576): the great Italian mathematician and physician, whose autobiography is of great interest. It was he who published to the world the method of solving cubic equations, known as Cardan's rule, though he had not discovered it himself. But his *Res Magna* is one of the chief mathematical treatises of the Renaissance.

About the end of the summer of 1799 my citizen's heart was suffering from our defeats in Italy, Novi and the rest, which caused my relations a keen joy, mingled, however, with anxiety. My grandfather, who was more reasonable, would not have wished the Austrians and Russians to get as far as Grenoble. But, to tell the truth, I can hardly talk of the desires of my family except by supposition; the hope of leaving them soon, and my keen, direct passion for mathematics absorbed me to such an extent that I no longer paid any but the slightest attention to the conversation of my relations. I did not say it distinctly, perhaps, but this is what I felt: "At the point which I have now reached, what do all their ravings matter to me?"

Soon a selfish fear came and mingled itself with my patriotic grief. I feared that on account of the approach of the Russians, there would be no examination at Grenoble.

Bonaparte landed at Fréjus. I plead guilty to having had this sincere desire: this young Bonaparte, whom I pictured to myself as a handsome young man, like a colonel in a light opera, ought to make himself King of France.

This word aroused in me none but brilliant and generous ideas. This groveling error was the fruit of my even more groveling education. My relations were like servants with regard to the Bourbons. At the very name of a king or a Bourbon, tears came into their eyes.

I do not know whether I felt this low sentiment in 1797, when I was reveling in the accounts of the battles of Lodi, Arcola, etc., which distressed my relations, who tried for a long time not to believe in them; or whether I had it in 1799, at the news of the landing at Fréjus. I incline toward 1797.

As a matter of fact, the approach of the enemy was the reason why M. Louis Monge, the examiner for the *École polytechnique*, did not come to Grenoble. "We shall

have to go to Paris," we all said. "But," I thought, "how shall I get my relations to consent to such a journey?" To go to the modern Babylon, the city of corruption, at the age of sixteen and a half! I was extremely agitated, but I have no clear recollections.

The examinations in M. Dupuy's mathematics class came round, and were a triumph for me.

I carried off the first prize, over the heads of eight or nine young men, most of them older and with more influence than I had, and all of whom, two months later, passed into the *École polytechnique*.

I was eloquent at the blackboard; the reason is that I was talking of a thing about which I had been thinking with passionate intensity for at least fifteen months, and which I had been studying for three years (verify this), since the opening of M. Dupuy's classes in the ground-floor classroom of the Central School. M. Dausse, a tenacious and learned man, put me the most difficult questions, which were the most likely to embarrass me. He was a man of alarming appearance, and never encouraged one. (He was like Domeniconi, an excellent actor whom I admire at the Teatro Valle in January 1836.)

M. Dausse, the chief engineer, a friend of my grandfather (who was present at my examination and delighted with it), added to the first prize a quarto volume of Euler. Perhaps this present was given me in 1798, at the end of which year I also carried off the first prize for mathematics. (M. Dupuy's course took two years, or even three.)

Immediately after the examination, in the evening, or rather on the evening of the day when my name was posted up with so much glory ("But on account of the way in which Citizen Beyle answered, of his exactitude and brilliant facility . . ."), occurred the last effort of M. Dupuy's policy; under the pretext of not spoiling the chances of my seven or eight companions, the most that he had been able to do was to see that they all got

a first prize; I mean, in order not to spoil their chances of admission to the *École polytechnique*; but M. Dausse, who was as obstinate as the devil, had a phrase such as I have quoted inserted in the official account, and so printed.

I can see myself walking among the trees in the public gardens, between the statue of Hercules and the railings, with Bigillion and two or three others, intoxicated by my triumph, for everybody thought it just and saw clearly that M. Dupuy did not like me; the report of the lessons which I had gone and taken from that Jacobin Gros, I, who had had the advantage of attending his lessons—his, M. Dupuy's!—was not likely to reconcile me with him.

And so, as I walked along, I said to Bigillion, philosophizing as was our wont:

“At such a moment, one could forgive all one's enemies.”

“On the contrary,” said Bigillion, “one would go up to them and conquer them.”

My joy did indeed intoxicate me a little, and I tried to argue in order to hide it; yet, essentially, this answer reveals a depth of meanness in Bigillion, who was more matter-of-fact than I was. My remark, at the same time, reveals the Spanish exaltation to which I was unfortunate enough to be subject all my life.

I can see some of the circumstances: Bigillion, my companions, and I had just read the notice with the sentence about me.

Under the archway of the entrance, at the door of the concert hall, was posted up the official account of the examinations, signed by the members of the departmental administration.

After that triumphal examination I went to Claix. My health demanded rest imperatively. But I had a new anxiety, about which I used to muse in the little wood of Doyatières, and among the bushes of the islands along

the Drac and the rock of Comboire, sloping up at an angle of forty-five degrees (I carried a rifle only for the sake of form): would my father give me the money to go and be swallowed up in the modern Babylon, that center of immorality, at the age of sixteen and a half?

Here again the excess of my passion and emotion has destroyed all my memories. I do not know in the least how my departure was arranged.

There was a question of a second examination by M. Dupuy. I was harassed, overwhelmed with work, I had really got to the end of my strength. Repassing arithmetic, geometry, trigonometry, algebra, conic sections, statics, in order to go up for a new examination, was a terrible burden. It was really too much for me. This new effort, which I was indeed expecting but not till December, would have given me a horror of my beloved mathematics. Luckily, the laziness of M. Dupuy, who was busy with his vintage at Noyarey, came to the support of mine. He said to me, calling me *tu*, which was his great sign of favor, that he knew perfectly well what I knew, and that a new examination was useless; and he gave me with a dignified and sacerdotal manner a magnificent certificate certifying a falsehood: namely, that he had given me a new examination for admission to the *École polytechnique*, and that I had acquitted myself with distinction.

My uncle gave me two or four louis d'or, which I refused. Probably my excellent grandfather and my Aunt Elisabeth gave me presents, but I have no memory of them at all.

My departure was arranged for with a M. Rosset, an acquaintance of my father's, who was returning to Paris, where he had settled.

What I am about to say is not very nice. At the very moment of my departure, while we were waiting for the carriage, my father received my farewells by the public gardens, beneath the windows of the houses facing the rue Montorge.

It was raining a little. The only impression which his tears made on me was that I found him very ugly. If this gives the reader a horror of me, let him remember those hundreds of compulsory walks to Les Granges with my Aunt Séraphie, walks which I was forced to take, *to give me pleasure*. It was this hypocrisy which angered me the most, and gave me a perfect loathing for that vice.

My emotion has absolutely deprived me of all recollection of my journey with M. Rosset, from Grenoble to Lyons, and from Lyons to Paris.

It was during the early days of November 1799, for at Nemours, twenty or twenty-five leagues from Paris, we heard of the events of the 18th of Brumaire³ (or the 9th of November 1799), which had taken place the day before.

We heard of them in the evening; I did not understand much about it, and I was delighted that young General Bonaparte should make himself King of France. My grandfather used often to talk enthusiastically about Philip Augustus and Bouvines; every King of France was in my eyes a Philip Augustus, a Louis XIV or a voluptuary like Louis XV, as I had seen him represented in Duclos's *Secret Memoirs*.

No harm, to my mind, was caused by sensuous imaginings. My fixed idea, the idea to which I came back four or five times a day, when I went out at nightfall, that moment of reverie, was that on my arrival in Paris a pretty woman, a *Parisienne*, even more lovely than Mlle Kably or my poor Victorine, would be upset from her carriage, or would fall into some great danger from which I should save her; that would be my starting-point in my becoming her lover. My motives were those of a huntsman.

³ 18th of Brumaire: November 9, 1799, the day upon which Napoleon seized the supreme power by force and took steps to make himself First Consul.

I should love her with such transports that I was bound to find her!

This wild idea, which I never confessed to anybody, lasted perhaps for six years. I was cured of it a little only by the unresponsiveness of the ladies of the Court of Brunswick, among whom I gained my first social experience in 1806.



CHAPTER XXXVI

M. Rosset set me down at a hotel at the corner of the rue de Bourgogne and the rue Saint-Dominique; the entrance was in the rue Saint-Dominique. They wanted me to be near the *École polytechnique*, which they thought I was going to enter.

I was greatly astonished at the sound of the bells striking the hour. The surroundings of Paris had seemed to me horribly ugly; there were no mountains at all! This distaste increased rapidly during the succeeding days.

I left the hotel and, out of economy, took a room overlooking the trees of the Esplanade des Invalides. I was to a certain extent taken care of and piloted by the "mathematicians" who had entered the *École* the year previously. I had to go and see them.

I had also to go and see my cousin Daru.

This was literally the first call which I had made in my life.

M. Daru, a man of the world, aged about sixty-five, must have been very much scandalized at my awkwardness, and this awkwardness must have been utterly lacking in grace.

I arrived in Paris with the firm resolve to be a seducer of women, what I should nowadays call a Don Juan (from the opera by Mozart).

M. Daru had been for a long time secretary-general to M. de Saint-Priest, the intendant of Languedoc, which nowadays, as it seems to me, forms seven Departments. You may have seen in the history books that the famous

Basville, that gloomy tyrant, had been the intendant, or rather the King of Languedoc from 1685 to 1710, perhaps. It was a province with its own assembly of Estates, and this vestige of public discussion and liberty called for a clever secretary-general under an intendant of the type of a great nobleman like M. de Saint-Priest, who was perhaps intendant from 1775 to 1786.

M. Daru had come from Grenoble, and was the son of a bourgeois with pretensions to nobility, but poor, out of pride, like all my family; he was a self-made man, and without stealing had amassed perhaps four or five hundred thousand francs. He had come through the Revolution cleverly, without allowing himself to be blinded by the love or hatred which he might have for his prejudices, the nobility and the clergy. He was a man without passion, save for the element of vanity in what was profitable, or the element of profit in what was vanity. I saw him from too lowly an angle to make out which of these was the case. He had bought a house in the rue de Lille, No. 505, at the corner of the rue de Bellechasse, in which he modestly occupied only the little apartment above the gateway.

The first floor at the far side of the court was let to Mme Rebuffel, the wife of a merchant of the highest worth, a man with a warmth of character and soul quite the opposite of M. Daru's. M. Rebuffel was a nephew of M. Daru, and, thanks to his yielding character and his habit of being all things to all men, put up with his uncle quite well.

M. Rebuffel used to come every day and spend a quarter of an hour with his wife and his daughter Adèle, and for the rest lived in the rue Saint-Denis, at his place of business, with Mlle Barberen, his partner and mistress, an active, common woman of thirty or thirty-five, who looked to me as if she were in the habit of making scenes and being unfaithful to her lover, and giving him a lively time of it.

I was welcomed affectionately, with heartfelt sincerity,

by Mme Rebuffel, whereas M. Daru received me with speeches about his affection and devotion for my grandfather, which made my heart sink and struck me dumb.

M. Daru was a tall, rather fine-looking old man, with a big nose, which is rather uncommon in Dauphiné; he had a slight cast in one eye, and a rather false manner. He had with him a little shriveled old woman, thoroughly provincial, who was his wife; he had married her in past days for the sake of her fortune, which was considerable, and, in spite of this, she hardly dared to breathe in his presence.

Mme Daru was good-natured at heart, and very polite, with a dignified little manner which would have suited the wife of a *sous-préfet* in the provinces. For the rest, I have never met a creature more utterly devoid of the divine fire. Nothing in the world could have stirred her soul in favor of anything noble or generous. In souls of that kind, an utterly selfish prudence, which is their boast, takes the place of all choleric or generous emotion.

This prudent, wise, but hardly admirable disposition formed the character of her elder son, the Comte Daru, Minister and Secretary of State to Napoleon, who had so much influence on my life; of Mlle Sophie, afterward Mme de Baure, who was deaf; and of Mme Le Brun, now the Marquise de Graves.

The second son, Martial Daru, had neither judgment nor intelligence, but a good heart; it was impossible for him to do a bad turn to anyone.

Perhaps Mme Cambon, the eldest daughter of M. and Mme Daru, had a noble character, but I only caught a glimpse of it; she died a few months after my arrival in Paris.

Is it necessary to warn the reader that I am sketching the character of these people as I saw it later? The definitive trait, which seems to me to be the true one, has caused me to forget all anterior ones (a term of drawing).

Nothing remains to me of my first entry into M. Daru's *salon* but a few mental pictures.

For instance, I can see perfectly well the little frock of red cotton print worn by a nice little girl of five, M. Daru's granddaughter, with whom he was playing, as Louis XIV when he was old and bored used to play with the Duchesse de Bourgogne. This nice little girl, if it had not been for whom a gloomy silence would often have prevailed in the little drawing-room on the rue de Lille, was Mlle Pulchérie Le Brun (now the Marquise de Brossard, very imperious, they say, with a figure like a barrel, who rules with a rod of iron over her husband, General de Brossard, who in turn rules over the Department of Drôme).

M. de B—— is a spendthrift with pretensions to the highest nobility, a descendant of Louis the Fat, I think, a braggart and a trickster, none too scrupulous in seeking means to restore his finances, which are always in disorder. The sum total is this: the character of a poor nobleman is an ugly character, which is usually allied with many unfortunate qualities. I mean by a man's *character* his habitual fashion of pursuing happiness; in clearer but less qualificative terms, the *sum of his moral habits*.

But I am wandering from the point. I was very far from seeing things, even physical things, as clearly as this in December 1799. I was all emotion, and this excess of emotion has left me nothing but a few very distinct mental pictures, with no explanation of their how and why.

What I see very clearly today, and what I felt in a confused way in 1799, is that on my arrival in Paris two of the great objects of my constant and passionate desire fell quite suddenly into nothingness. I had adored Paris and mathematics. Paris with no mountains inspired me with a distaste so profound that it went almost as far as homesickness. Mathematics came to be no more to me than the scaffolding of yesterday's fire-

works (seen at Turin, the day after Midsummer Days, 1802).

I was tormented by these changes, of which I could not, of course, at the age of sixteen and a half, see the why and the wherefore.

As a matter of fact, I had loved Paris only out of my profound distaste for Grenoble.

As for mathematics, it had been nothing but a means. I even hated it a little in November 1799, for I was afraid of it. I was determined not to be examined at Paris, as the seven or eight pupils had been who had won first prizes after me at the Central School; all of whom had passed. Now if my father had taken a little trouble about me, he would have forced me to take this examination, I should have entered the school, and I should no longer have been able *to live in Paris and write comedies*.

Of all my passions, this was the only one that was left to me.

I cannot conceive—and this idea comes to me for the first time as I write this, thirty-seven years after the events—I cannot conceive how it happened that my father did not force me to go in for the examination. He probably trusted to the extreme passion for mathematics which he had seen in me. Besides, my father was moved only by what was near to him. I had, however, an absolute terror of being forced to enter the *École*, and I waited with the utmost impatience for the announcement of the beginning of the term. In the *exact sciences*, it is impossible to start on a course at the third lesson.

Let us come to the mental pictures which are left in my head.

I can see myself eating my dinner, alone and abandoned, in a cheap room which I had taken on the Esplanade des Invalides, at the end, between the ends, on this side of the Esplanade, of the rue de l'Université and the rue Saint-Dominique, a few steps from the offices of the Civil List in the time of the Emperor,

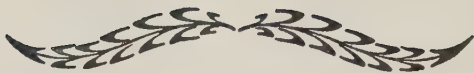
where, a few years later, I was to play such a different part.

The profound disappointment of finding Paris so little to my liking had upset my digestion. The mud of Paris, the absence of mountains, the sight of so many busy people passing rapidly by me in their fine carriages like people with nothing to do, plunged me into deep grief.

A doctor who had taken the trouble to study my condition, which was certainly not very complicated, would have given me an emetic and ordered me to go every three days to Versailles or Saint-Germain.

I fell into the hands of an utter charlatan, more ignorant even than that: he was an army surgeon, very thin, who had settled in the neighborhood of the Invalides (then a very poor neighborhood), and his duty was to treat the venereal diseases of the pupils of the *École polytechnique*. He gave me black draughts, which I took all alone and abandoned in my room, which had only one window seven or eight feet up the wall, like a prison. I can see myself sitting there miserably beside a little iron stove, with my herbal infusion on the ground.

But my greatest unhappiness, while I was in this state, was this idea, which returned incessantly: "Great God! What a miscalculation! What, then, ought I to wish for?"



CHAPTER XXXVII

It must be admitted that my fall was great and terrible. And the person who experienced it was a young man of sixteen and a half, with one of the least reasonable and most passionate natures that I have ever come across!

I had no confidence in anybody.

I had heard Séraphie and my father's priests *boasting* of the facility with which they could manage—that is to say, deceive—such and such a person, or gathering of persons.

Religion seemed to me a dark and powerful machine; I had still some belief in hell, but none in priests. The pictures of hell which I had seen in the octavo Bible bound in green parchment, with illustrations, and in my poor mother's editions of Dante, horrified me; but the effect of the priests was nil. I was far from seeing what religion really is: a powerful corporation with which it is most advantageous to be affiliated; witness my contemporary and townsman young Genoude, who often brought me my coffee, with no stockings on, at the Café Genoude, at the corner of the Grande-rue and the rue du Département, but has been M. de Genoude in Paris for twenty years.

My only support was my common sense and my belief in the mind, as defined by Helvétius.¹ I say *belief* pur-

¹ Helvétius (1715-1771): French philosopher, whose chief work, *De l'esprit* (On the Mind), sets forth a sensualist philosophy in which all ideas and mental processes are derived from physical sensation, and self-interest is stated to be the leading motive of human action.

posely; brought up, as I had been, under a vessel exhausted of air, devoured by ambition, barely emancipated by my years at the Central School, Helvétius could be for me only a *foreshadowing of the things I was going to meet with*. I had confidence in this vague prediction, because two or three little predictions had been verified in the course of my short experience.

I was no artful dodger, sharp and suspicious, able to get the better of a transaction involving twelve *sous* by an excessive display of shrewdness and distrust, like most of my companions; by counting the pieces of stick which ought to have been in the bundles supplied by our landlord, like my companions the Monvals, whom I had found in Paris at the *École*, where they had been for a year. I walked the streets of Paris a passionate dreamer, gazing at the sky, and always on the point of being run over by a cabriolet.

In a word, I was not *clever at the practical details of life*, and consequently I could not be appreciated, as I saw this morning in some newspaper or other of 1835, written in that journalistic style which tries by an unusual style to throw an illusion over the insignificance or puerility of the thoughts.

To have seen this truth about myself would have been to be clever in the practical details of life.

The Monvals gave me very sensible advice, which would have prevented me from being robbed of two or three *sous* a day, but their ideas horrified me—they must have thought me an idiot on the way to a lunatic asylum. It is true that, out of pride, I did not express my ideas much. It seems to me that it was the “Monvaux,” or some other students who had gone to the *École* a year before, who found me my room and my cheap doctor.

Was it Sinard? Had he died of consumption at Grenoble a year before, or did he die there only a year or two after?

In the midst of these friends, or rather of these chil-

dren, full of common sense, and quarreling about three *sous* a day with the landlord—who made a legitimate profit of perhaps eight *sous* a day out of each of us poor devils, and stole three; total: eleven *sous*—I was “plunged in involuntary ecstasies, in interminable reveries, in infinite inventions” (as the newspaper says *pompously*).

I had a list of relationships which conflicted with the passions—for instance, *priest* versus *love*, *father* versus *patriotism*, or *Brutus*—which seemed to me the key to what was sublime in literature. This was entirely my own invention. I had forgotten it for perhaps twenty-six years; I must come back to this subject.

I was in a state of constant and deep emotion. “What, then, am I to love, if Paris does not please me?” I used to answer: “A charming woman upset from her carriage a few yards from me; I will pick her up, and we shall adore each other; she will recognize my soul and see how different I am from the ‘Monvaux.’”

But I used to give myself this answer, which was in deadly earnest, two or three times a day, and especially at nightfall, which is still often for me a moment of tender emotion, in which I feel inclined to kiss my mistress (when I have one) with tears in my eyes.

But I was a creature in a continual state of emotion, and never thinking, or only in rare moments of anger, how to prevent our landlady from cheating me of three *sous* on the firewood.

Dare I say it? But perhaps it is not true: *I was a poet*. Not, it is true, like the amiable Abbé Delille, whom I got to know two or three years later through Cheminade (rue des Francs-Bourgeois, in the Marais), but like Tasso; forgive my pride. I had none of this pride in 1799, I did not know how to write a verse. It was less than four years ago that I said to myself that in 1799 I was very near to being a poet. I lacked only the boldness to write, a *chimney* through which my *genius* might escape.

After the word "poet" comes "genius"; forgive my moderation.

"His sensibility has become too acute: what only grazes another will draw blood from him." As I was in 1799, so I am still in 1836; but I have learned to hide all this under an irony which is imperceptible to the vulgar, but which Fiore easily divined.

"The affection and tender emotions of his life are crushing and disproportionate, his excessive enthusiasms lead him astray, his sympathies are too genuine, *those whom he pities suffer less than he does.*"

This is true, word for word, of me. (Setting apart its bombastic style and self-importance, this newspaper is right.)

What brings out the difference between me and the self-important idiots of the newspaper, *who carry their heads like the Blessed Sacrament*, is the fact that I have never believed society owed me anything at all; Helvétius saved me from this enormous folly. "Society" (he says) "pays for the services which it sees."

Tasso's error and misfortune was to say to himself: "What! The whole of Italy, with all her wealth, cannot provide a pension of two hundred sequins (2,300 francs) for her poet!"

I read this in one of his letters.

For lack of having read Helvétius, Tasso failed to see that the hundred men out of ten millions who understand the *Beautiful*, not as an imitation or improvement of the Beautiful which is comprehensible to the vulgar, require twenty or thirty years to persuade the twenty thousand next most sensitive souls after their own that this new beauty is really beautiful.

I may observe that there is an exception to this when party spirit is involved. M. de Lamartine wrote perhaps two hundred fine verses in his life. The Ultra party had been accused of *stupidity* about 1818 (they were called "M. de la Jobardièrre," *i.e.*, "Lord Simpleton Gull"), and so their wounded vanity extolled the writings of a

nobleman with the violence of a stormy lake breaking through its embankments.

So I have never had the idea that men were unjust to me. I regard as supremely ridiculous the unhappiness of all our poets, who ruminate on this idea and condemn the contemporaries of Cervantes and Tasso.

It seems to me that at that time my father used to give me a hundred or a hundred and fifty francs a month. This was wealth. I did not have to think about being short of money; consequently, I gave no thought to money at all.

It was a heart to love me—a woman—which I lacked.

Prostitutes filled me with horror. What would have been simpler than to do as I do nowadays, and hire a pretty girl for a louis in the rue des Moulins!

I was not short of louis. No doubt my grandfather and my Great-aunt Elisabeth had given me some, and I had certainly not spent them. But the smile of a loving heart! But the glance of Mlle Victorine Bigillion!

All the loose stories, exaggerating the corruption and greed of prostitutes, which were told me by the mathematicians who surrounded me and served as my friends, made me sick at heart.

They used to talk about the *pierreuses*, the girls at two *sous*, on the stones two hundred yards from the door of our wretched house.

The heart of a friend—that was what I lacked. M. Sorel used sometimes to invite me to dinner, M. Daru also, I suppose, but I found these men so far removed from my sublime ecstasies, and, out of vanity, I was so shy, especially with women, that I used to say nothing.

“A woman? A girl?” says Chérubin. Except in regard to beauty, I was Chérubin; I had black hair, very curly, and eyes of an ardor that was frightening.

“The man whom I love” or: “My lover is ugly, but nobody reproaches him with his ugliness, he is so witty.” That is what Mlle Victorine Bigillion said, about this

time, to Félix Faure, who knew only long years after to whom it applied.

He was teasing his pretty neighbor Mlle Victorine Bigillion one day about her indifference. It seems to me that Michel or Frédéric Faure, or else Félix himself, wished to pay attentions to Mlle Victorine.

(Félix Faure, peer of France, First President of the Royal Courts at Grenoble, a groveling creature and worn out physically.

Frédéric Faure, a canning Dauphiné type, devoid of all generosity, clever, died as a captain in the artillery at Valence.

Michel, even more cunning and even more typical of Dauphiné, perhaps not very brave, a captain in the Imperial Guard, whom I knew in Vienna in 1809; Director of the Workhouse at Saint-Robert near Grenoble [from whom I drew M. Valenod in the *Rouge*].

Bigillion, a good-hearted, honorable man, very economical, chief clerk of the Tribunal of first instance, killed himself about 1827, through annoyance, I think, at being a cuckold, but with no anger against his wife.)

I do not wish to represent myself as an unhappy lover on my arrival in Paris in November 1799, nor indeed as a lover at all. I was too much taken up with the world and what I was to do in this world which was so unknown to me.

This problem was my mistress; hence my idea that love, before one has a position and has made one's entry into the world, cannot be as devoted and entire as in a person who thinks he knows what the world is like.

However, I often dreamed with ecstasy of our mountains of Dauphiné; and Mlle Victorine passed several months every year at the Grande-Chartreuse, where her ancestors had entertained Saint Bruno in 1100. The Grande-Chartreuse was the only mountain which I knew. It seems to me that I had already been there once or twice with Bigillion and Rémy.

I had a tender recollection of Mlle Victorine, but I did not for an instant doubt that a young girl of Paris would be a hundred times superior to her. All the same, the first appearance of Paris was supremely distasteful to me.

This profound distaste, this disenchantment, combined with an execrable doctor, made me feel rather ill, as it seems to me. I could no longer eat.

Did M. Daru have me looked after during this first illness?

All of a sudden, I see myself in a room on the third floor in the rue du Bac; this lodging was entered through the Passage Sainte-Marie, which is nowadays so changed and improved. My room was a garret, and the last flight of stairs was wretched.

I must have been very ill, for old M. Daru brought the famous Dr. Portal to see me, and his face alarmed me. It had the expression of resignation that people assume on seeing a corpse. I had a nurse, quite a new thing for me.

I have since learned that I was threatened with a dropsy on the chest. I was delirious, I think, and was quite three weeks or a month in bed.

Félix Faure used to come and see me, it seems to me. I believe he has told me—and when I think of it, I am sure of it—that in my delirium I used to call upon him, as he was good at handling arms, to return to Grenoble and challenge to a duel all those who made fun of us for not entering the *École polytechnique*.

If I ever speak to this judge of the April prisoners again, ask him questions about our life in 1799. A cold, timid, selfish nature like his must have precise recollection; besides, he must be two years older than I am, and must have been born in 1781.

I can see two or three mental pictures of my convalescence.

My nurse used to make me soup by my fireplace, which seemed to me low, and I was strongly advised

not to take cold; as I was supremely bored at staying in bed, I listened to this advice. The physical details of life in Paris shocked me. I can see myself, with no transition after my illness, lodged in a room on a second floor of M. Daru's house in the rue de Lille (or de Bourbon, when there are any Bourbons in France), No. 505; this room overlooked four gardens, it was fairly spacious, and shaped rather like an attic; the ceiling between the two windows sloped at an angle of forty-five degrees.

This room suited me very well. I bought a notebook in order to write comedies.

It was at this period, I think, that I dared to go and see M. Cailhava and buy a copy of his *Art of Comedy*, which I could not find at any bookseller's. I unearthed this old bachelor in a room in the Louvre, I believe. He told me that his book was badly written, which I denied bravely. He must have taken me for a madman.

I never found more than one idea in this devil of a book, and that was not Cailhava's but Bacon's. But is one idea in a book nothing, then? It deals with the definition of *laughter*.

My passionate cohabitation with mathematics has left me with a violent love of good definitions, without which one arrives at nothing but approximations.



CHAPTER XXXVIII

But, once the art of comedy was on my table, I began seriously to thrash out this great question: ought I to become a composer of operas, like Grétry? or a writer of comedies?

I hardly knew my notes (M. Mention had dismissed me as unworthy to play the violin); but I said to myself: "The notes are nothing but the art of writing down ideas, the essential thing is to have these." And I thought I had some. What is comical is that I still think so today, and I am often annoyed that I did not leave Paris to go and be a lackey of Paisiello at Naples.

I have no taste for purely instrumental music; even the music of the Sistine Chapel and the choir of the chapter of Saint Peter's gives me no pleasure (I have confirmed this judgment on the [1] of January 1836, the day of the *Cattedra* at Saint Peter's).

Vocal melody alone seems to me to be the product of genius. An idiot may become as learned as he likes; he cannot, in my opinion, produce a good song, like, for instance, "*Se amor si gode in pace*" (first act and perhaps the first scene of the *Matrimonio Segreto*).

When a man of genius takes the trouble to study melody, he arrives at the fine instrumentation of the quartet in *Bianca and Faliero* (by Rossini) or the duet in *Armida*, by the same composer.

In the palmy days of my taste for music, at Milan, from 1814 to 1821, when on the morning of a new opera I used to go and fetch my libretto from the Scala, I

¹ Blank in French text.

could not help, as I read it, composing all the music, singing the airs and duets. And dare I say it? Sometimes, in the evening, I found my melody *more noble* and *more tender* than that of the maestro.

As I neither had nor have any technical knowledge whatsoever, any means of fixing the melody on a piece of paper so as to be able to correct it without fear of forgetting the original tune, it was like the first idea of a book when it comes to me. It is a hundred times more intelligible than after I have worked at it.

But, after all, it is this first idea which is never found in the books of second-rate writers. Their strongest phrases seem to me like Priam's javelin, *sine ictu* [without force].

For instance, I have made, as it seems to me, a charming melody (and I have seen the accompaniment) for these verses of La Fontaine (criticized by M. Nodier as not very pious; but this was in 1820, under the Bourbons):

*Un mort s'en allait tristement
S'emparer de son dernier gîte,
Un curé s'en allait gaiement
Enterrer ce mort au plus vite.*¹

This is perhaps the only melody which I have made to French words. I have a horror of being forced to pronounce *gî-teu, vi-teu*. The French seem to me to have the most striking lack of talent for music.

Just as the Italians have the most striking lack of talent for the dance.

Sometimes, when I am purposely talking nonsense to myself, to make myself laugh, so as to give an opening for the jokes of the opposition party (which I often feel

¹ A corpse went sadly on its way
To lie in its last resting-place,
A priest went gaily on his way
To bury it in the briefest space.

so clearly within me), I say to myself: "But how could I, being a Frenchman, have any talent for music in the style of Cimarosa?"

My reply is: "On the side of my mother, whom I resemble, I am perhaps of Italian blood. That Gagnoni who fled to Avignon after assassinating a man in Italy perhaps married the daughter of an Italian in the suite of the vice-legate."

My grandfather and my Aunt Elisabeth had an obviously Italian type of face, the aquiline nose, etc.

And now that five years of continuous residence in Rome have made me more thoroughly acquainted with the physical structure of the Romans, I see that my grandfather had exactly the figure, the head, and the nose of a Roman.

What is more, my uncle, Romain Gagnon, had a head which was obviously almost Roman, with the exception of his complexion, which was very beautiful.

I have never seen a fine song composed by a Frenchman: the most beautiful of them do not rise above the rough character suitable to a *popular song*; that is to say, one intended to please everybody. Such is:

*Allons, enfants de la Patrie . . .*²

by Rouget de Lisle, a captain, a song composed in a night at Strasbourg.

This song seems to me highly superior to all that have ever come out of a French brain; but, by its very nature, necessarily inferior to the:

*"Là, ci darem la mano,
Là, mi dirai di sì . . ."*³

of Mozart.

I must confess that the only songs which I find com-

² The first line of the Marseillaise.

³ The duet between Don Juan and Zerlina in Mozart's *Don Juan*.

pletely beautiful are those of these two composers: Cimarosa and Mozart; and I would be hanged before I could be made to say sincerely which I prefer to the other.

When my ill luck has made me acquainted with two dull *salons*, it is always the one I have just left which seems to me the heavier.

When I have just listened to Mozart or Cimarosa, it is always the last one I have heard who seems to me perhaps a little preferable to the other.

Paisiello seems to me a fairly pleasant little *piquette* [thin wine], which one can even ask for and drink with pleasure at those times when one finds wine too strong.

I will say as much for a few airs by some composers inferior to Paisiello, for instance: "*Senza spose non mi lasciate, signor governatore*" (I do not remember the lines) from the *Cantatrici Villane* of Fioravanti.

The worst of this thin stuff is that after a moment one finds it flat. One should not drink more than one glass.

Almost all writers are sold to religion when they write about the races of mankind. The very small number of sincere people who exist confuse proved facts with suppositions. It is when a science is in its beginnings that a man who does not belong to it, like me, may risk talking about it.

I say, then, that it would be useless to expect a sporting-dog to have the intelligence of a poodle, or a poodle to be able to tell us that a hare had gone by six hours ago.

There may be individual exceptions, but the general truth is that the poodle and the sporting-dog have each their own talent.

It is probably the same with the races of mankind.

What is certain, as observed by Constantin and me, is that we have seen a whole company of Romans (seen in 1834, I think) who think of nothing but music, and sing the finales of Rossini's *Semiramis*, and the most difficult music, very well, waltzing for a whole evening to the

music of a quadrille; it is true that it was badly played as regards time. The Roman, and even the Italian in general, has the most striking absence of talent for dancing.

I have put the cart before the horse, on purpose not to make the French of 1880 indignant when I dare to make them read that nothing could equal the lack of talent of their ancestors in 1830 in judging or executing vocal music.

The French have become learned in this sort of thing since 1820, but they are still barbarians at heart; I need no other proof than the success of Meyerbeer's *Robert the Devil*.

The French are less insensible to German music, with the exception of Mozart.

What a Frenchman likes in Mozart is not the awe-inspiring novelty of the song in which Leporello invites the statue of the *commendatore* to supper; it is rather the accompaniment. Besides, this creature, who is, above all things and beyond all things, *vain*, has been told that this duet or trio is sublime.

If one perceives on the surface of the earth a piece of rock charged with iron, it leads one to believe that by sinking a shaft and deep galleries one will succeed in finding a satisfactory amount of metal; perhaps, on the other hand, one will find nothing.

I was in this state with regard to music in 1799. Chance brought it to pass that I have tried to note the sounds of my soul by printed pages. My laziness and lack of opportunity to learn the physical, stupid side of music, to know how to play the piano and note down my ideas, played a great part in this determination, which would have been quite different if I had found an uncle or a mistress who loved music. As for my passion, it has remained unimpaired.

I would walk ten leagues in the mud, the thing I detest the most in the world, in order to be present at a good performance of *Don Juan*. If I hear an Italian word

from *Don Juan*, immediately the tender memory of the music comes back and takes possession of me.

I have only one objection to raise, and that a hardly intelligible one: does music please me as a *symbol*, a memory of youthful happiness, or in *itself*?

I am of the latter opinion. *Don Juan* charmed me even before I heard Bonoldi call from the little window (at the Scala, Milan):

*"Falle passar avanti,
Dí che ci fan onore?"*

But this is a delicate subject. I will return to it when I plunge into a discussion of the arts during my stay at Milan, that passionate epoch and, I may say, on the whole, the *flower of my life*, from 1814 to 1821.

Does the air "*Tra quattro muri*," sung by Mme Festa, please me as a symbol, or by its intrinsic merit?

Does not "*Per te ogni mese un pajo*," from the *Pre-tendenti Delusi*, delight me as a symbol?

Yes, I admit the symbol for the last two, and so I never praise them as masterpieces. But I do not at all believe in the symbol in the case of the *Matrimonio Segreto*, which I have heard sung sixty or a hundred times at the Odéon by Mme Barilli; was it in 1803 or 1810?

Certainly no "work in ink" (*opera d'inchiestro*), no work of literature, gives me such acute pleasure as *Don Juan*.

The fourteenth page of the new edition of De Brosses, which I read lately in January 1836, came very near it, all the same.

A great proof of my love for music is that Feydeau's *opéra-comique* puts me in a bad temper.

Though I could dispose of my cousin Mme de Longueville's box, I could bear only half a performance. I go to this theater every two or three years, conquered by curiosity, and I come out at the second act, like the Viscount. (The Viscount would come out indignant, at

the second act, with his temper spoiled for the whole evening.)

French opera spoiled my temper even more thoroughly till 1830, and I disliked it again utterly in 1833 with Moncrif and Mme Damoreau.

I have written at length, because one is always a bad judge of one's own passions or tastes, especially when they are the tastes of good society. There is not a single affected young man in the Faubourg Saint-Germain, such as M. de Blancmesnil, for instance, who does not say he is wildly enthusiastic about music. For my part, I abhor everything in the shape of a French song. The *Panseron* makes me furious; it makes me hate what I passionately love.

Good music makes me dream with delight of what is engaging my heart at the moment. Hence the delightful moments which I found at the Scala from 1814 to 1821.



CHAPTER XXXIX

It was not enough to lodge in M. Daru's house; I had to dine there too, which bored me to death.

I disliked Parisian cookery almost as much as the absence of mountains, and apparently for the same reason. I did not know what it was to lack money. For these two reasons, nothing was so disagreeable to me as these dinners in M. Daru's poky apartment.

As I have said, it was situated above the entrance gate.

It was in this drawing-room and dining-room that I suffered cruelly, at receiving *from others* that breeding from which my relations had so judiciously exempted me.

Even nowadays I am still lacking in a polite, ceremonious address, scrupulously fulfilling all social observances, and so it chills me and reduces me to silence. It is only necessary to add a tinge of religion and declaim about the great principles of morality, and it kills me.

You may judge what was the effect of this poison in January 1800, applied to organs which were absolutely fresh, and whose extreme receptiveness did not allow them to lose a drop of it.

I used to come into the drawing-room at half past five; there I used to shiver as I thought how I should have to offer my arm to Mlle Sophie or Mme Cambon, or to Mme Le Brun, or to Mme Daru herself, to lead them to table.

(Mme Cambon gradually sank under an illness which was already turning her very sallow. Mme Le Brun is a Marquise in 1836; the same is the case with Mlle Sophie,

who has since become Mme de Baure. We lost the parents, Mme Daru and old M. Daru, long years ago. Mlle Pulchérie Le Brun is now the Marquise de Brosard in 1836. MM. Pierre and Martial Daru are dead, the former in 1829, the latter two or three years later. Mme Le Brun = the Marquise de Graves, wife of the former Minister of War.)

At table, where I sat at H, not a morsel that I ate gave me any pleasure. Parisian cookery was utterly distasteful to me, and still is, after so many years. But this dislike was nothing at that age, as I well realized when I could go to a restaurant.

It was the moral constraint which was killing me.

It was not the sentiment of injustice and of hatred for my Aunt Séraphie, as it had been at Grenoble.

Would to God I had got off with unhappiness of this kind! It was far worse: it was the unceasing consciousness of the things which I wanted to do, but could not achieve.

You can judge of the extent of my unhappiness! I, who believed myself to be a mixture of Saint-Preux and Valmont (in the *Liaisons dangereuses*, an imitation of *Clarissa*, which had become the breviary of all provincials), I, who believed that I had an unbounded capacity for loving and being beloved, and thought that it was only opportunity that I lacked—I found myself awkward and in every way inferior to the whole of this society, which I considered gloomy and depressing; what would it not have been in a *salon* of charming people!

So this was the Paris for which I had longed so much!

I cannot think today how it was that I did not go out of my mind between the 10th of November 1799 and about the 20th of August 1800, when I left for Geneva.

I do not know whether I was not bound to be present at luncheon as well as at dinner.

But how can I give any idea of my folly? I had arrived at a conception of society solely and wholly by

means of the *Secret Memoirs* of Ducros, the three or seven volumes of Saint-Simon which had then been published, and novels.

I had seen the world—and even then, as it were, through the neck of a bottle—only at the house of Mme de Montmort, the original of Mme de Merteuil in the *Liaisons dangereuses*. She was old by then, rich and lame; I am sure of that. As to her moral qualities, she used to object to my being given only half a pickled walnut; when I went to see her at Le Chevallon, she always had me given a whole one. "It hurts children so!" she used to say. That is all I saw of her morality. Mme de Montmort had rented or bought the house of the Drevons, dissipated young men who were intimate friends of my uncle, Romain Gagnon, and had gradually ruined themselves.

This original detail about Mme de Merteuil is perhaps out of place here, but I wanted to show by the anecdote of the pickled walnut what I knew about the world.

This is not all; there was something much worse. I regarded as a shame to me, and almost as a crime, the silence which all too often reigned at the court of a despotic, bored old bourgeois like old M. Daru.

This was my principal grief. In my opinion, a man ought to be a passionate lover, and at the same time he ought to carry life and animation into every company where he happens to be.

And, moreover, this universal gaiety, this art of pleasing everybody, ought not to be based on the art of flattering everybody's tastes and weaknesses. I was quite innocent of all this side of the art of pleasing, which would probably have revolted me. The amiability which I desired was the pure joy of Shakespeare in his comedies, the amiability reigning at the court of the exiled Duke in the Forest of Arden.

Imagine this pure, ethereal amiability at the court of

an old prefect, a bored libertine who had turned pious. I think!!!

Absurdity cannot go further; but my unhappiness though founded on an absurdity, was none the less real for that.

These silences, when I was in M. Daru's *salon*, made me wretched.

What part did I play in this *salon*? I never opened my lips, according to what has been told me by Mme Le brun, Marquise de Graves. The Comtesse d'Ornise told me lately that Mme Le Brun is friendly to me; I must ask her to throw some light on the figure which I cut in M. Daru's *salon* on my first appearance there, at the beginning of 1800.

I was perishing of constraint, disappointment, and discontent with myself. Who could have told me that the greatest joys of my life were to fall to me five months afterward!

"Fall" is the right word; all this fell to me from heaven; and yet it came from my soul, which was also my only resource during the four or five months for which I occupied my room in old M. Daru's house.

All my sufferings in the drawing-room and dining-room disappeared when, alone in my room overlooking the gardens, I said to myself: "Ought I to become a musical composer, or to write comedies, like Molière?" I felt, vaguely, it is true, that I did not know either the world or myself well enough to decide.

I was distracted from these lofty thoughts by another problem, far more mundane and much more insistent. M. Daru, like the strict man that he was, could not understand why I had not entered the *École polytechnique*, or, if that year was lost, why I was not going on with my studies in order to go up for examination the next time, in September 1800.

The severe old man gave me to understand, with great politeness and restraint, that an explanation between us

on this point was necessary. It was, above all, this restraint and politeness which were so new to me; I heard myself called "Monsieur" by a relation for the first time in my life, and this left my shyness and wild imagination bewildered.

I can explain this now. I grasped the essentials of the question quite well; but these polite and unaccustomed preliminaries made me suspect the existence of unknown and terrifying abysses from which I should be unable to extricate myself. I felt scared at the diplomatic formalities of the adroit ex-prefect, to which I was then quite unable to give their real names. All this made me incapable of lifting up my voice in defense of my opinion.

My complete ignorance of college made me a child of ten in my relations with the world. The very appearance of such an imposing person—who made everybody tremble before him, beginning with his wife and his eldest son—talking to me *tête-à-tête* behind closed doors, made it absolutely impossible for me to say two consecutive words. I can see today that that face of old M. Daru's, with the slight cast in his eye, represented exactly for me

Lasciate ogni speranza, voi ch'intrate.

Not to see it was the greatest pleasure it could give me.

In me, extreme agitation always destroys memory. Perhaps old M. Daru said to me something of this nature: "My dear cousin, it would be as well to make up your mind within the next week."

In my excess of shyness, distress, and "disarray," as they say at Grenoble, and as I used to say then, it seems to me that I wrote out in advance the conversation which I wished to have with M. Daru.

I can recall only a single detail of this terrible interview. I said, only not in such clear terms:

"My relations leave me practically free to judge what course I am to take."

"That is only too apparent," replied M. Daru, in a meaning tone, which struck me very much in a man so restrained and of such circumlocutory and diplomatic habits.

This remark struck me; all the rest I have forgotten.

I was very well pleased with my room overlooking the gardens, between the rue de Lille and the rue de l'Université, with a bit of a view over the rue de Bellechasse.

The house had belonged to Condorcet, whose pretty widow was then living with M. Fauriel (now a Member of the Institute—a true savant, loving learning for itself, which is such a rare thing in that body).

So as not to be harassed by worldly affairs, Condorcet had had a miller's ladder made of wood, by means of which he used to climb up to the third story (I was on the second), to a room above mine. How that would have impressed me three months earlier! Condorcet, the author of that *Logic of Future Progress* which I had read two or three times with enthusiasm!

Alas! my heart had changed. As soon as I was alone and quiet and rid of my shyness, this deep feeling returned:

"And is Paris nothing but that?"

This meant: "What I have desired so much as the supreme good, the thing for which I have sacrificed my life for the last three years, bores me." It was not the sacrifice of three years which touched me; in spite of my fear of entering the *École polytechnique* in the following year, I loved mathematics; the terrible question through which I had not enough intelligence to see clearly was this: "Where, then, is happiness to be found on earth?" And sometimes I even arrived at this question: "Is there such a thing as happiness on earth?"

Having no mountains damned Paris absolutely in my eyes.

Having clipped trees in its gardens was the last straw.

All the same, I am glad now (in 1836) to draw a

distinction. I was not unjust to the beautiful green of these trees.

I felt, rather than saying it in so many words: "Their shape is deplorable, but what a delightful mass of green, with charming labyrinths in which the imagination wanders!"

This last detail I add today. At that time I had sensations without distinguishing causes too clearly. Sagacity, which has never been my strong point, was entirely lacking in me; I was like a nervous horse which does not see the things that are there, but imaginary obstacles or perils. The good side of it was that my courage rose to the test and I walked proudly up to the greatest dangers. I am still like that today.

The more I walked in Paris, the less I liked it. The Daru family were very kind to me, Mme Cambon complimented me upon my long artistic coat of olive green turned out with velvet. "It suits you very well," she used to say.

Mme Cambon was kind enough to take me to the museum with a family party and a M. Gorse or Gosse, a common great fellow who was paying her mild attentions. She was dying of melancholy at having lost her only child, a daughter of sixteen, a year before.

We left the museum, and I was offered a place in the cab; I returned on foot through the mud, and, charmed by the kindness of Mme Cambon, I had the brilliant idea of going to see her. I found her *tête-à-tête* with M. Gorse.

I felt, however, the full extent, or part of the extent, of my stupidity.

"But why did you not get into the carriage?" said Mme Cambon in astonishment.

I disappeared after a minute. M. Gorse must have had a nice idea of me. I must have been a singular problem to the Daru family; their comments must have varied between "He is a madman" and "He is an idiot."



CHAPTER XL

Mme Le Brun, now the Marquise de Graves, has told me that all the occupants of that little *salon* were astonished at my complete silence.

I was silent by instinct; I felt that nobody would understand me. What faces to talk to about my tender admiration for Bradamante! This silence, which was brought about by chance, was my best policy; it was my only means of maintaining a little personal dignity.

If I ever see this clever woman again, I must press her with questions, so that she tells me what I was like at that time. I really do not know. I can only register the degree of happiness felt by the machine that constitutes me. As I have always gone on thrashing out the same ideas ever since, how am I to know what stage I had reached then? The well was ten feet deep, and every year I have added five feet; now, at a depth of a hundred and ninety feet, how am I to have any impression of what it was in February 1800, when it was only ten feet deep?

They used to admire my cousin Marc (my chief at the Ministry of Commerce), the most typically prosaic creature in existence, because when he came home at ten o'clock in the evening to M. Daru's house, he used to walk up to the Carrefour Gaillon on purpose to eat a certain kind of little pie.

This simplicity, this naïve greediness, which would make me laugh nowadays in a child of sixteen, filled me with astonishment in 1800. I rather imagine, even, that

I went out again one evening, through that abominable damp of Paris, which I loathed, in order to go and eat some of these little pies. I took this step partly for pleasure, but chiefly to make an impression. The pleasure was less than the trouble, and so, it seems, was the impression I produced; if they thought about it at all, they must have seen in it nothing but an unoriginal imitation. I was careful not to explain simply why I had taken this step; if I had done so, I in my turn should have been original and naïve, and perhaps this freak of mine at ten o'clock at night would have given this bored family an opportunity for a smile.

The illness which brought Dr. Portal climbing up to my third floor in the Passage Sainte-Marie must have been a serious one, for I lost all my hair. I did not fail to buy a wig, and my friend Edmond Cardon did not fail to throw it up onto the cornice over a door in his mother's *salon* one evening.

Cardon was very slender, very tall, very well-bred, very rich, with perfect manners, a very fine doll, and the son of Mme Cardon, a waiting-woman of Queen Marie Antoinette.

What a contrast between Cardon and me! and yet we became friends. We had been friends at the time of the Battle of Marengo, when he was an aide-de-camp of Carnot, the Minister of War; we went on writing to each other till 1804 or 1805. In 1815 this elegant, noble, charming creature blew out his brains on seeing the arrest of Marshal Ney, a relation of his by marriage. He was in no way compromised; it was simply a passing madness, caused by a courtier's excessive vanity at having had a marshal and prince for a cousin.

Since 1803 or 1804 he liked to be called Cardon de Montigny; he introduced me to his wife, a rich, elegant woman, stammering a little, who seemed to me to be afraid of the ferocious energy of this Allobrogian type from the mountains. The son of this good, amiable

creature calls himself M. de Montigny, and is a counselor or auditor at the Royal Courts in Paris.

Ah! how much good a piece of good advice would have done me at that time! How much good the same advice would have done me in 1821! But devil take me if anyone ever gave it to me. I saw it for myself about 1826, but it was almost too late, and, besides, it was too upsetting to my habits. I have since seen clearly that it is the *sine qua non* in Paris; but I should also have had less truth and originality in my literary ideas.

What a difference it would have made if M. Daru or Mme Cambon had said to me in January 1800:

"My dear cousin, if you wish to have any standing in society, it is necessary that twenty people should be interested in speaking well of you. Consequently, choose a *salon*, do not fail to go there every Tuesday (if that is the right day); make it your business to be charming, or at least very polite, to all the people who frequent this *salon*. You will be somebody in society; you may hope to win the favor of a charming woman when you are supported by two or three *salons*. By the end of ten years of perseverance, these *salons*, if you choose them in our rank of society, will bring you all you want. The essential thing is to persevere, and be one of the faithful few who call every Tuesday."

This is where I have always failed. This is the meaning of M. Delécluze's exclamation (Delécluze of the *Débats*, about 1828): "If you only had a little more knowledge of the world!"

This good fellow must have been very sure of the truth of this remark, for he was furiously jealous of a few epigrams which, to my great surprise, produced a great effect; for instance, when I said at his house: "Bosquet is nothing but a serious make-believe [*une blague sérieuse*]."

In 1800 the Daru family crossed to the other side of the rue de Lille and went to live on the first floor of

the house of Mme Cardon, Marie Antoinette's former waiting-woman; she was very glad to be under the protection of two Commissaries of War so well accredited as M. Daru, an organizing commissary, and M. Martial Daru, an ordinary commissary. This is how I explain the connection nowadays, and I am wrong to do so; for lack of experience, I was no judge of such matters in 1800. I beg the reader, then, not to waste time over these explanations which fall from me in 1836; they are romance of a more or less probable kind, not history.

So then I was, or I thought I was, very well received in Mme Cardon's *salon* in January 1800.

We used to play charades and dress up, and there was no end to our jokes. Poor Mme Cambon did not always come: this nonsense jarred on her grief, of which she died a few months later.

M. Daru (the one who was afterward Minister) had just published his *Cléopédie*, I think, a little poem in the jesuitical style—I mean, in the style of the Latin poems written by Jesuits about 1700. It seemed to me undistinguished and fluent; it is quite thirty years since I read it.

M. Daru, who was essentially lacking in intelligence (but I guess this, in strict secret, only as I write), was excessively proud of being the president of four literary societies at a time. This form of imbecility abounded in 1800, but was not so hollow as it seems to us today. Society was coming back to life after the Terror of '93 and the semi-terror of the succeeding years. It was the elder M. Daru who told me with mild delight of this proud distinction of his elder son's.

As M. Daru was coming back from one of these literary societies, Edmond disguised himself as a woman of the streets and tried to accost him only twenty yards from home. This was rather free behavior. Mme Cardon still had the gaiety of 1788; it would have scandalized our prudery in 1836.

On M. Daru's return, he found himself being followed upstairs by this young woman, who was undoing her petticoats.

"I was perfectly astonished," he said to us, "to find that our neighborhood was infested."

A little time after this, he took me to a meeting of one of the societies over which he presided. It used to meet in a street which was pulled down in order to enlarge the Place du Carrousel, near that part of the new colonnade, to the north of the Carrousel, which adjoins the main thoroughfare of the rue de Richelieu, forty yards farther to the west.

It was half past seven in the evening, and the rooms were badly lit. I could not endure the poetry; how different from Ariosto and Voltaire! This was bourgeois and dull (what a good school I belonged to already!), but I admired greatly and longingly the bust of Mme Constance Pipelet, who read a piece of poetry. I have told her about it since. She was then the wife of a poor devil of a surgeon, who operated for hernia, and I spoke to her in the house of the Comtesse Beugnot, when she was Princess Salm-Dyck, I think. I will tell the story of her marriage, preceded by a two-month visit to Prince Salm, with her lover, to see whether he would dislike the castle too much; and the Prince was not at all deceived, but knew all and submitted to it; and he was right.

I went to the Louvre, to Renault's, the publisher of the *Education of Achilles*, that uninteresting picture, engraved by the excellent Berwick; and I became a pupil in his Academy. All the tips which I had to give for satchels, chair hire, etc., surprised me very much; I was completely ignorant of all these Parisian customs, and, to tell the truth, of all customs whatsoever. I must have seemed mean.

Everywhere I went, I carried with me my terrible disappointment.

"That I should find Paris, which I had pictured to myself as the supreme good, uninteresting and detestable!" Everything about it was distasteful to me, down to the cooking, which was not that of my father's house—that house which had seemed to me a combination of every bad quality.

To complete my misery, the fear of being forced to pass an examination for the *École* made me come to hate my beloved mathematics.

It seems to me that the terrible old M. Daru said to me: "Since, according to the certificates which you have with you, you are so much superior to your seven friends who have passed the examination, you could even now, if you are admitted, catch them up easily in the lectures which they are attending."

M. Daru spoke to me like a man accustomed to exerting influence and obtaining exceptional treatment.

One thing, fortunately for me, must have checked M. Daru's insistence that I should resume the study of mathematics. My relations no doubt represented me as a prodigy in every line; my excellent grandfather adored me, and, besides, I was his handiwork; in reality, I had had no master but him, except in mathematics. He used to do my Latin composition with me, and he did practically all my Latin verses on the fly which finds a black death in the white milk.

Such was the wit of the Jesuit father who had written the poem of which I used to reconstruct the verses. If it had not been for the writers whom I read in secret, I should have been doomed to that type of intelligence, and to admiring Comte Daru's *Cléopédie* and the wit of the French Academy. Would that have been a bad thing? Between 1815 and 1830 I should have had success, reputation, and money, but my works would have been much more ordinary and much "better written" than they are. I believe that the affectation which has been called "good writing" between 1825 and 1836 will be very ridiculous about 1860, as soon as France, deliv-

ered from the political revolutions which recur every fifteen years, has the time to think about intellectual enjoyment. The strong and violent government of Napoleon (of whom I was so fond personally) lasted only fifteen years, from 1800 to 1815.

The nauseating government of those idiotic Bourbons (see the song by Béranger) also lasted fifteen years, from 1815 to 1830. How long will a third one last? Will it be any longer?

But I am wandering from the point. Our grandchildren will have to pardon these digressions, for we hold the pen in one hand and the sword in the other (as I write this, I am awaiting the news of Fieschi's¹ execution, and of the new ministry of March 1836; and in my official capacity, I have just signed three letters, addressed to Ministers whose names I do not know).

Let us return to January or February 1800. In reality, I had the experience of a child of nine, and probably a satanic pride. I had really been the most remarkable boy at the Central School. Moreover, what was more important, I had just ideas about everything, I had read enormously, and I adored reading; a new book which was unknown to me consoled me for everything.

But the Daru family, in spite of the success gained by the author of the translation of Horace, was not at all literary; they were a family of courtiers of the time of Louis XIV, as depicted by Saint-Simon. They cared for nothing in M. Daru, the eldest son, but the fact of his success; any literary discussion would have been equivalent to a political crime, as tending to cast doubt upon the good reputation of the house.

One of the misfortunes of my character is that I forget my successes and have an indelible memory for any sillinesses. Toward February 1800 I wrote to my family:

¹ A Corsican who headed the conspiracy to assassinate Louis Philippe in July 1835. The King was not wounded, but several other persons were, including Fieschi himself. He was sentenced to death and executed in February 1836.

"Mme Cambon reigns over the empire of wit, and Mme Rebuffel over that of the senses."

A fortnight later I was deeply ashamed both of my style and of the statement.

It was a falsehood, and, what was far worse, it was a piece of ingratitude. If there was a place where I was less constrained and more natural than elsewhere, it was in the *salon* of the pretty, excellent Mme Rebuffel, who lived on the first floor of the house where I had a room on the second; my room, as it seems to me, was over Mme Rebuffel's drawing-room. My uncle Gagnon had related to me how moved she had been at Lyons when he admired her pretty foot and wanted her to put it up on her trunk so that he could see it better. Once, if it had not been for M. Bartelon, M. Rebuffel would have surprised my uncle in a compromising position.

Mme Rebuffel, my cousin, had a daughter, Adèle, who gave promise of great intelligence; it seems to me that the promise has not been realized. After loving each other for a little (a childish love), hatred, and then indifference, took the place of this trifling, and I have entirely lost sight of her since 1804. I learned from the newspapers in 1835 that her stupid husband, the Baron Auguste Petiet, the same who gave me a saber cut in the left foot, had left her a widow with a son at the *École polytechnique*.

Was it in 1800 that Mme Rebuffel had as her lover M. Chieze, a rather starchy gentleman of Valence, in Dauphiné, and a friend of my family at Grenoble; or was it not until 1803? Was it in 1800 or 1803 that the excellent Rebuffel, a man of a good heart and intelligence, and always estimable in my eyes, asked me to dinner in the rue Saint-Denis, at the transport office which he ran with a certain Mlle Barberen, his partner and mistress?

What a difference it would have made to me if my grandfather had sent me with an introduction to M.

Rebuffel instead of to M. Daru! M. Rebuffel was a nephew of M. Daru, only seven or eight years younger than he was, and, thanks to his political or, rather, administrative office as secretary-general for the whole of Languedoc (seven Departments), M. Daru took it upon himself to domineer over M. Rebuffel, whose conversations with him, as related by him to me, were a glorious mixture of respect and decision. I remember comparing the tone adopted by him with that of J. J. Rousseau in his *Letter to Christophe de Beaumont*, Archbishop of Paris.

M. Rebuffel could have done anything with me; I should have been more reasonable if chance had placed me under his guidance. But it was my destiny to conquer everything at the point of the sword. What an ocean of violent *sensations* my life has been, especially at that period!

I had a great many in connection with the small events which I am about to relate, but what was their import? What was it that I passionately desired? I no longer remember.

The eldest son of M. Daru (I will call him the Comte Daru, in spite of the anachronism; he was not made a count till about 1809, I think, but I am in the habit of so calling him), the Comte Daru, then, if I may be allowed so to call him, was in 1809 secretary-general of the Ministry for War. He was killing himself with work, but it must be admitted that he talked of it all the time and was always in a bad temper when he came to dinner. Sometimes he used to keep his father and the whole family waiting for an hour or two. He would arrive at last looking like an ox, worn out with toil and with red eyes. He often used to return to his office in the evening. As a matter of fact, everything had to be reorganized, and they were secretly preparing for the campaign of Marengo.

I am going to be born, as Tristram Shandy says, and the reader is going to emerge from these childish trifles.

One fine day old M. Daru took me aside and made me tremble; he said to me: "My son will take you to work with him at the War Office." Probably, instead of thanking him, I stood there in sullen silence, due to extreme shyness.

Next morning I was walking by the side of Comte Daru, whom I admired, but who made me tremble; I was never able to get accustomed to him, nor, as it seems, was he to me. I can see myself walking along the rue Hillerin-Bertin, which was very narrow then. But where was this Ministry of War, where we used to go together?

I can see only my place at my table, at H or H'; at the one of these two desks which I did not occupy was M. Mazoyer, author of the tragedy of *Thésée*, a pale imitation of Racine.



CHAPTER XLI

At the end of the garden were some miserable closely-clipped lime trees, behind which we used to go and relieve ourselves. They were the first friends I had in Paris. Their fate aroused my pity: to be clipped like that! I used to compare them with the fine lime trees at Claix, which had the joy of living among the mountains.

But should I have liked to return to these mountains?

Yes, it seems to me I should, if I had not had to go back to my father there, but could have lived with my grandfather; yes, only free.

To such a point had my extreme passion for Paris fallen. And I even found myself saying that the true Paris was invisible to my eyes.

The lime trees of the Ministry of War grew red at the tips. M. Mazoyer, no doubt, reminded me of the verse of Virgil:

Nunc erubescit ver.

That was not it, but I remember it, as I write, for the first time in thirty-six years.

At heart I had a horror of Virgil, as the favorite of the priests who used to come and say Mass and talk to me about Latin at the house of my relations. Never in spite of all the efforts of my reason, has Virgil recovered in my eyes from the effect of this bad company.

The lime trees began to bud. At last they had leaves! I was deeply moved; so then I had some friends in Paris!

Every time I went to relieve myself behind these lime trees at the end of the garden, my soul was *refreshed* by the sight of these friends. I still love them, after thirty-six years of separation.

But do these good friends still exist? There has been so much building in that neighborhood! Perhaps the Ministry where I took up the official pen for the first time is still the Ministry in the rue de l'Université, opposite the square of which I do not know the name.

There M. Daru set me down at a desk and told me to copy a letter. I will say nothing about my writing like spiders' legs, far worse than it is now; but he discovered that I was writing *cela* with two *l*'s: *cella*.

So this was the man of letters, the brilliant *humanist* who questioned the merit of Racine and had carried off all the prizes at Grenoble!!

Today, *but only today*, I wonder at the kindness of the whole Daru family. What could they do with a creature so proud and so ignorant?

And the fact remains that I did indeed attack Racine in my conversations with M. Mazoyer. There were four of us clerks there, and the two others, as it seems to me, used to listen while I sparred with M. Mazoyer.

I had an esoteric theory which I wished to set forth under the title of *Filosofia Nova*, a title half Italian, half Latin. I had a true, heartfelt, and passionate admiration for Shakespeare, though I had seen him only through the medium of the heavy, pompous phrases of M. Letourneur and his assistants.

Ariosto had also much power over my heart (but it was the Ariosto of M. de Tressan, father of the amiable captain who used to play the clarinet and had had a part in making me learn to read, an extreme Ultra and a brigadier general about 1820).

I think I can see that what protected me from the bad taste of admiring the *Cléopédie* of the Comte Daru, and soon afterward the Abbé Delille, was this esoteric doctrine founded on the true pleasure—a deep, reasoned

pleasure, verging on happiness—which had been given me by Cervantes, Shakespeare, Corneille, and Ariosto, and a hatred for what was puerile in Voltaire and his school. When I dared to talk about this question I was downright to the point of fanaticism, for I had not the least doubt that all healthy men who were not spoiled by a bad literary education thought like me. Experience has taught me that the majority allow the artistic sensibilities which they may have by nature to be directed by the fashionable writer of the day; it was Voltaire in 1788, Walter Scott in 1828. And who is it nowadays, in 1836? Nobody, luckily.

This love for Shakespeare, Ariosto, and, on a lower plane, for the *Nouvelle Héloïse*, which were the masters of my literary affections on my arrival in Paris at the end of 1799, preserved me from the bad taste (Delille, minus his charm) which prevailed in the Daru and Cardon *salons*, and which was all the more dangerous for me, and all the more contagious, because the Comte Daru was a writer actually producing works, whom everybody admired in other departments, and whom I admired myself. He had just been the chief organizer, I believe, of that Army of Helvetia which had just saved France at Zurich, under Masséna. M. Daru the elder used constantly to repeat to us how General Masséna was saying to everybody, when speaking of M. Daru: "There is a man whom I can present both to my friends and to my enemies."

And yet Masséna, who was well known to me, was as thieving as a jackdaw—I mean to say, by instinct. He is still talked of at Rome (the monstrosity of the Daru family, at Santa Agnese, Piazza Navona, I think), and M. Daru has never stolen a centime.

But, good heavens! how I am chattering! I cannot get so far as to talk about Ariosto, whose characters, grooms with the *strength of porters*, bore me so much today. From 1796 to 1804 Ariosto did not produce his true

effect upon me. I took the tender, romantic passages perfectly seriously. They prepared unconsciously the only avenue by which emotion can reach my soul. I can be touched by a tender emotion only *after a comic passage*.

Hence my almost exclusive love for *opera bouffe*, hence the gulf which separates my nature from that of the Baron Poitou (see, at the end of the volume, the preface to De Broses which annoyed Colomb) and of all the vulgar in 1830, who can only recognize courage by the mustache.

There alone, in *opera bouffe*, can I be moved to tears. The emotional pretensions of serious opera immediately prevent all possibility of emotion in me. Even in real life, a beggar who asks for charity with piteous cries does not touch me, but, on the contrary, makes me think with extreme severity of the utility of penitentiaries.

A beggar who does not speak to me, who does not utter lamentable and tragic cries, as is the custom in Rome, but eats an apple as he drags himself along, like the cripple I saw a week ago, immediately touches me almost to tears.

Hence my aversion from tragedy, and my almost ironical aversion from tragedy in verse.

There is one exception, in favor of that great, simple man Pierre Corneille, in my eyes immensely superior to Racine, that courtier full of artifice and correct speech. The rules of Aristotle, or rather the alleged rules of Aristotle, were, like verse, an obstacle to this original poet. Racine is original in the eyes of the Germans, the English, etc., only because they have not yet had a witty court, like that of Louis XIV, obliging all the rich, noble persons in a country to pass eight hours together every day in the *salons* of Versailles.

Lapse of time will bring the English, Germans, Americans, and other people whose money or income is acquired in spite of logic, to understand the courtier's skill of Racine, and his most innocent *ingénue*, Junie or

Aricie,¹ an adept in the arts of the respectable strumpet.

Racine could never create a Mlle de La Vallière, but always a creature full of artifice, and perhaps physically virtuous but certainly not morally.

About 1900 perhaps the Germans, Americans, and English will arrive at an understanding of the whole courtier-like spirit of Racine. A century later, perhaps, they will get far enough to feel that he could never draw a La Vallière.

But how will these feeble people be able to perceive a star so near to the sun? The admiration of these polished and money-loving bores for the civilization which gave a charming veneer even to Marshal Boufflers, who was a fool (died about 1712), will prevent them from feeling the entire lack of simplicity and naturalness in Racine, and from understanding this line of Camille's:

*"Tout ce que je voyais me semblait Curiace."*²

Nothing is more simple than that I should write this at the age of fifty-three; but that I should have felt it in 1800, that I should have a sort of horror of Voltaire, of the graceful affectation of *Alzire*; this, and my contempt, which rightly approached so near to hatred, is what astonishes me—me, the pupil of M. Gagnon, who thought well of himself for having been a guest of Voltaire's at Ferney for three days; me, brought up at the foot of the little bust of this great man, mounted on an ebony pedestal.

Am I, or is the great man, on the ebony pedestal?

In fact, I admire what I stood for in literature in February 1800, when I wrote *cella*.

* * *

¹ Junie and Aricie: the *ingénues* in Racine's *Britannicus* and *Phèdre*, respectively.

² "All that I saw seemed to speak to me of Curiace," from Corneille's *Horace*, where Camille, the heroine, is speaking of Curiace, her betrothed.

The Comte Daru, though so immensely superior to me and to so many others as a man of business and a consulting advocate, had not enough intelligence to suspect what this proud madman was worth.

M. Mazoyer, my fellow clerk, who sat next to me, who was apparently less bored with my mixture of follies and pride than with the stupidity of the two other clerks, at a salary of 2,500 francs, had some opinion of me, but I was indifferent to it. I regarded everyone who admired that adroit courtier named Racine as incapable of seeing and feeling true beauty, which, in my eyes, consisted in the naïveté of Imogen exclaiming:

"Salut, pauvre maison, qui te gardes toi-même!"

The insults heaped upon Shakespeare by M. Mazoyer with such contempt in 1800 moved me to tears on behalf of this great poet. In later days, nothing made me adore Mme Dembowski so much as the criticism of her uttered by the prosaic spirits of Milan. I may mention the name of this charming woman, for who thinks of her today? Am I not the only one, perhaps eleven years after she left this earth? I apply the same reasoning to the Comtesse Alexandrine Petit. Am I not her best friend today, after twenty-two years? And when this appears (if there is ever a bookseller who is not afraid to waste his time and his paper!), when this appears after my death, who will still think of Métilde and Alexandrine? And, in spite of their feminine modesty and that horror of attracting public attention which I noticed in them, if, from the place where they are, they see this book published, will they not be glad?

"For who, to dumb forgetfulness a prey," is not happy to see his name pronounced by the lips of a friend after so many years?

But where the devil was I?—At my desk, where I used to write *cella* for *cela*.

If my reader has a soul in the least common, he will

imagine that this digression has as its object to hide my shame at having written *cella*. He is wrong, I am another sort of man. The errors of the man of 1800 are discoveries which I make for the most part as I write this. I remember nothing, after so many years or events, but the smile of the woman I loved. The other day I had forgotten the color of one of the uniforms I had worn. Now, kind reader, have you any experience of what a uniform means in a victorious army which is the sole object of the nation's interest, like the army of Napoleon?

Today, thanks be to Heaven, the Tribune has obscured the Army.

Really now, I cannot remember in what street the office was situated in which I took up the pen of an administrator for the first time. It was at the end of the rue Hillerin-Bertin, which then ran along by the side of garden walls. I can see myself walking gravely by the side of the Comte Daru, on the way to his office after the gloomy, chilly luncheon at his house, No. 505, at the corner of the rue de Bellechasse and "that of Lille," as the good writers of 1800 used to say.

What a difference it would have made to me if M. Daru had said to me: "When you have a letter to compose, consider well what you want to say, and then consider the shade of reproof or command which the Minister who is to sign your letter wishes to give to it. When you have made up your mind, write boldly."

Instead of this, I tried to imitate the form of M. Daru's letters; he repeated too often the expression "in fact," and so I crammed my letters with "in facts."

How far from that were the great letters I used to invent at Vienna in 1809, at a time when I had a horrible attack of syphilis, the charge of a hospital with four thousand wounded, a mistress whom I was deceiving, and another mistress whom I adored! All this change was effected by my own reflections alone; M.

Daru never gave me any advice except by his anger when he struck things out of my letters.

The good Martial Daru was always on terms of chaff with me. He used often to come to the War Office; for a Commissary of War, it was the Court. He had the duty of keeping order at the Hospital of the Val-de-Grâce, it seems to me, in 1800, and no doubt the Comte Daru, the best head in that Ministry of 1800 (which is not saying much), knew the secret of the army of reserve. All the personal vanities in the corps of Commissaries of War were seething because of the creation of the corps, and still more because they were choosing the uniform for the Inspectors of Reviews.

It seems to me that it was then I saw General Olivier, with his wooden leg, who had recently been appointed inspector-in-chief of reviews. This vanity, raised to its height by the gold-laced hat and red coat, was the basis of all conversation in the Daru and Cardon families. Edmond Cardon, pushed by his clever mother, who used openly to flatter the Comte Daru, had the promise of a position as assistant to the Commissaries of War.

The good Martial soon let me guess that there was a possibility of my also having this charming uniform.

As I write, I seem to make the discovery that Cardon wore it: a royal-blue coat with gold embroidery on the collar and the cuffs of the sleeves.

At this distance, in matters of vanity (a secondary passion in me), things imagined and things seen become confused.

The excellent Martial, then, having come to see me in my office, found that I had sent a letter to a department of the office marked with the word "Information."

"The devil!" he said to me with a laugh; "you are already sending round letters like this!"

It seems to me that this was the privilege of an assistant head of department at least, and I was the most lowly of supernumeraries.

On receiving a memo marked "Information," the pay-office, for instance, would give information as to pay, the outfitting department as to outfitting. Supposing it was a question of a clothing officer of the 7th Light Horse, who had to return 107 francs out of his pay, that being the sum due for some serge which he had wrongly received, I required information from the two above-mentioned departments in order to write the letter for M. Daru, the secretary-general, to sign.

I am convinced that very few of my letters went to M. Daru; M. Barthomeuf, a common man but an excellent clerk, was then beginning his career as his private secretary (that is to say, as a clerk paid by the War Office, employed in the office where M. Daru used to write); it was he who had to bear with the stranger's caprices and the excessive work which that man, terrible for himself as for others, exacted from all those who came near him. I soon became infected with the *terror* inspired by M. Daru, and this feeling for him has never left me. I was born excessively sensitive, and the severity of his remarks was without measure or limit.

For a long time, however, I was not important enough to be bullied by him. And now that I think it over reasonably, I see that I was never really ill-used by him. I did not suffer a hundredth part of what was endured by M. de Baure, a former advocate-general of the Parliament of Pau.³ (Was there such a Parliament? I have no books at Civit -Vecchia to look it up, but all the better—this book made from my memory alone shall not be made with other books.)

I see that between M. Daru and me there was always something corresponding to the bit of padding carried away by an enemy's bullet, which makes what is called a "mattress" on the body of the cannon which has been struck by the bullet (as at the Ticino, in 1800).

³ Pau was the seat of the *Parlement* for the provinces of Navarre and B arn, created in 1620, and has still its court of law.

My "mattress" was Joinville (now Baron Joinville, military intendant of the 1st division at Paris), and afterward M. de Baure. I am led to this idea, which is quite novel to me. Can M. Daru have been sparing my feelings? It is quite possible. But my *terror* of him has always been so great that this idea comes to me only in March 1836.

Everybody at the War Office trembled on entering M. Daru's office. As for me, I was afraid even when I looked at the door. No doubt old M. Daru saw this feeling underlying my constraint, and with the character which I now recognize him to have had (a timid character, which was *bolstered* up by the terror which he inspired), my fear must have commended me to him.

Coarse natures such as M. Barthomeuf seem to have been less sensitive to the strange words with which this *raging bull* overwhelmed everybody who came near him at those times when he was crushed with work.

By this *terror* he kept going the seven or eight hundred clerks in the War Office, the chief of whom, fifteen or twenty important ones, mostly without any talent, who were appointed heads of departments, were soundly bullied by M. Daru. These animals, instead of shortening and simplifying their business, often tried to make it more complicated, even for M. Daru. I admit that it is enough to drive a man to the devil to see lying on the left-hand side of his writing-table twenty or thirty letters requiring an urgent answer. And I have often seen on M. Daru's desk a stack a foot high of these letters asking for instructions; and even then there are few people who would be delighted to be able to say to you: "I did not receive your Excellency's orders in time . . ."—and with the prospect of a Napoleon losing his temper at Schönbrunn and saying that there has been negligence.



CHAPTER XLII

My relations with M. Daru, which began like this in January or February 1800, ended only with his death, in 1829. He was my benefactor, in this sense: that he employed me by preference to many others; but I passed many a rainy day, with my head aching as a result of an overheated stove, writing from ten in the morning till an hour after midnight, and that under the eyes of a furious man, who was constantly in a rage because he was *always afraid*. It was a case of his friend Picard's theory of ricochets: he was in mortal terror of Napoleon, and I was in mortal terror of him.

At Erfurt, in 1809, will be seen the utmost limit, the *ne plus ultra*, of our work. M. Daru and I did all the work in the office of the commissariat department of the army for three or eight days. There was not even a copyist. Amazed at what he was doing, M. Daru lost his temper perhaps only two or three times a day; it was a perfect picnic. I was angry with myself for being upset by his hard words. It did not matter one way or the other to my promotion, and, besides, I have never been wildly anxious for promotion. I can see today that I tried as much as possible to be separated from M. Daru, even if it was only by a half-closed door. His hard words about everybody, both absent and present, were unbearable to me.

When I wrote *cela* with two *l*'s at the War Office at the end of the rue Hillerin-Bertin, I did not, by a long way, know to the full the severity of M. Daru, that

volcano of insults. I was absolutely astonished, I had barely the experience of a child of nine, and yet I had just turned seventeen on the 23rd of January 1800.

What distressed me was the incessant conversation of my fellow clerks, which prevented me from working or thinking. For more than six weeks, by the time four o'clock came round I was stupefied by it.

Félix Faure, who had been a fairly intimate school friend of mine at Grenoble, did not at all share my wild dreams of Love and Art. It is this absence of any touch of wildness in him which always blunted the edge of our friendship, which has been a mere companionship in life. He is now a peer of France, a First President of the Courts, and has condemned to twenty years' prison, without very much remorse, I think, those April madmen who, in view of the King's perjury, would have been too heavily punished by six months' imprisonment. He also sent to his death that second Bailly, the wise Morey, guillotined on the 19th of March 1836, who was perhaps guilty, but it was not proved. Félix Faure would resist an injustice if he were asked for five minutes, but if twenty-four hours be allowed to his vanity—which is the most bourgeois that I know—if a king asks for the head of an innocent man, he will find reasons for granting it. Selfishness, and a complete absence of the slightest spark of generosity, joined to a gloomy character, like an Englishman's, and the fear of going mad, like his mother and sister, form the character of this friend of mine. He is the most undistinguished of all my friends, and the one who has made the greatest fortune.

How different from the generosity of Louis Crozet or Bigillion! Mareste would do the same things, but without any illusion, simply for promotion, in the *Italian spirit*. Edmond Cardon would have done the same things, while lamenting them and covering them with as much grace as possible; d'Argout with courage, thinking of the personal danger and setting this fear aside.

Louis Crozet (chief engineer at Grenoble) would have exposed his life heroically rather than condemn to twenty years' imprisonment a generous madman like Kersanné (whom I have never seen), who would have been too heavily punished by six months' imprisonment. Colomb would refuse even more definitely than Louis Crozet, but he might be taken in.

And so, almost the most undistinguished of all my friends is Félix Faure (peer of France), with whom I lived on intimate terms in January 1800, from 1803 to 1805, and from 1810 to 1815 and 1816.

Louis Crozet has said to me that his talents hardly reached mediocrity, but his constant gloom gave him dignity at the time when I got to know him at mathematics, it seems to me about 1797. His father, who had been born very poor, had made a nice fortune in the administration of the Finances, and had a fine demesne at Saint-Ismier (two leagues from Grenoble, on the road from Barraux to Chambéry).

But I bethink me that my severity toward this undistinguished peer of France will be taken for envy. Shall I be believed when I add that I should absolutely disdain to change my reputation for his? Ten thousand francs and an exemption for all proceedings against my future writings would be my marshal's baton, ideally, it is true.

Félix Faure introduced me, at my request, to Fabien, a fencing-master in the rue Montpensier, I think, off the rue des Cabriolets, near the Théâtre Français, behind Corazza's, near the passage opposite the fountain, and the house where Molière died. There I used to fence not with, but in the same room as, several Grenoble men.

Two dirty scoundrels, notable among the rest (I am speaking of essentials, not appearances, and of rascality in private affairs, not matters of state), were MM. Casimir Périer, afterward the Minister, and D——, member of the Chamber of Deputies in 1836. The latter not only

cheated somebody of ten francs at cards at Grenoble about 1800, but was caught in the act.

Casimir Périer was perhaps at that time the handsomest young man in Paris; he was gloomy and unsociable, and his fine eyes gave signs of madness.

I mean madness in the strict sense of the word. Mme Savoye de Rollin, his sister, who was renowned for her rigid piety, and yet not ill-natured, had been mad, and for many months had used expressions worthy of Aretino, in the clearest and most unveiled terms. It is a curious thing; where could a pious woman, of very good society, have heard a dozen words which I dare not write here? What explains this amiable quality a little is that M. Savoye de Rollin, an extremely witty man, a philosophical libertine, etc., etc., and a friend of my uncle's, had become impotent as a result of his excesses a year or two before his marriage with the daughter of "Milord" Périer. This was the nickname given by Grenoble to a man of intelligence who was a friend of my family, who despised good society from the bottom of his heart, and left three hundred and fifty thousand francs to each of his ten or twelve children, all more or less pompous, stupid, and mad. Their tutor had also been mine, that deep, cold-hearted rogue the Abbé Railane.

"Milord" Périer never thought of anything but money. My grandfather Gagnon, who was fond of him in spite of his protestant attitude in good society, which greatly annoyed M. Gagnon, used to tell me that when M. Périer entered a drawing-room, he would never fail to reckon up at the first glance exactly how much the furniture had cost. My grandfather, like all orthodox people, used to put into the mouth of "Milord" Périer, who fled from the good society of Grenoble like the plague about 1780, such humiliating admissions as this:

One evening my grandfather met him in the street and said: "Come up with me to call on Mme de Quinsonnas."

"I will make a confession to you, my dear Gagnon; when one has gone on continuously for a certain time without going into good society, and has become to a certain extent accustomed to bad company, one feels out of place in the good."

I suppose that the good society of the wives of the Presidents of the Parliament of Grenoble, Mmes de Sassenage, de Quinsonnas, de Bailly, still contained a certain proportion of alloy or of *affectation* which was too much for a man of a vigorous nature like "Milord" Périer. I think I should have been very bored in the society in which Montesquieu used to shine about 1745, in the *salons* of Mme Geoffrin or Mme de Mirepoix. I discovered lately that the wit of the first twenty pages of La Bruyère (who educated me in literature in 1803, thanks to Saint-Simon's praise of him, in the three- and seven-volume editions) is an exact copy of what Saint-Simon calls "being infinitely witty." Now in 1836 these twenty pages are puerile, empty, very well-bred, it is true, but hardly worth the trouble of writing. The style is admirable in that it does not spoil the thought, which unfortunately lacks force and is *sine ictu*. These twenty pages were perhaps witty up till 1789. Wit, which is so delightful for those who feel it, does not last. As a fine peach spoils in a few days, so wit spoils in two hundred years, and more quickly still if there is a revolution in the relations which exist between the classes of society or in the distribution of power in a society.

Wit ought to be five or six degrees above the ideas which form the average intelligence of the public.

If it is eight degrees above, it *gives the public a headache* (the fault of Dominique's¹ conversation, when he is animated).

To complete the explanation of my thought, I will say that La Bruyère was five degrees above the ordinary intelligence of the Ducs de Saint-Simon, Charost, Beau-

¹ "Dominique" is a name under which Stendhal sometimes refers to himself.

villiers, Chevreuse, La Feuillade, Villars, Montfort, Foix, Lesdiguières (old Canaple), Harcourt, La Rocheguyon, La Rochefoucauld, Humières, of Mme de Maintenon, de Caylus, de Berry, etc., etc., etc.

La Bruyère would have been at the average level of intelligence about 1780, in the time of the Duc de Richelieu, Voltaire, M. de Vaudreuil, the Duc de Nivernais (the supposed son of Voltaire), when the dull Marmontel was taken for a wit, in the days of Duclos, Collé, etc., etc.

In 1836, except for matters of literary art, or rather of style, but expressly excepting from this reservation his judgments on Racine, Corneille, Bossuet, etc., La Bruyère remains below the level of the society which might meet at the house of Mme Boni de Castellane; composed of MM. Mérimée, Mole, Koreff, myself, the elder Dupin, Thiers, Béranger, the Duc de Fitz-James, Saint-Aulaire, Arago, Villemain.

Upon my word, there is a dearth of wit; everybody reserves all his strength for the profession which is to give him a position in the world. The *ready money* of wit, which is unexpected even in expression—the wit of Dominique, for instance—alarms the proprieties. If I am not mistaken, wit is going to take refuge with ladies of easy virtue, with Mme Ancelot (who has not got more lovers than Mme Talaru, the first or the second, but in whose presence one dares to go further).

What a terrible digression *in favor* of my readers of 1880! But will they understand the allusion to *in favor*? I doubt it; the public crier will have another expression for making the King's speeches sell to the public. What is an allusion that has to be explained? It is wit in the style of Charles Nodier, it is tiresome wit.

I must paste in here an example of the style of 1835. It is M. Gozlan speaking in the *Temps*.²

The most gentle, the most truly youthful of all the

² No extract follows.

gloomy Grenoble men who used to fence at the elegant Fabien's was undoubtedly M. César Pascal, the son of an equally charming father, to whom Casimir Périer gave the Cross of the Legion of Honor when he was Minister and the receivership-general at Auxerre to the amiable Turquin, his half-brother on the mother's side, and another receivership-general, at Valence, to Casimir's nephew, M. Camille Teisseire.

But with all his semi-rascality in business, M. Casimir Périer had the typical quality of Dauphiné; he had a will. The breath of Paris, weakening and corrupting the will-power, had not yet reached our mountains in 1800. I can bear faithful witness for my friends. Napoleon and Fieschi had the power of willing which is *lacking* in M. Villemain, M. Casimir Delavigne, and M. de Pastoret (Amédée), who were educated in Paris.

At the elegant Fabien's rooms I convinced myself of my lack of talent for fencing. His assistant, the gloomy Renouvier, who killed himself, I think, after killing his last friend in a duel with a thrust of his sword, very honestly gave me to understand my lack of talent. I have always been very glad to fight duels with pistols; I did not foresee this good fortune in 1800, and in my annoyance at always parrying a tierce or carte too late, I resolved, if the occasion arose, to rush upon my adversary at once. This was an embarrassment to me in the army every time I found myself with a sword at my side. At Brunswick, for instance, my awkwardness might have sent me *ad patres*, with the Grand Chamberlain Munichhausen; luckily he was not brave that day, or rather, he did not wish to compromise himself. I had the same lack of talent for the violin; but, on the other hand, a natural and remarkable talent for shooting partridge and hares; at Brunswick I brought down a raven at forty paces with a pistol shot from a carriage advancing at a brisk trot, which won me the respect of that most

polite man, General Rivaut's aide-de-camp (Rivaut de la Rafinière, hated by the Prince of Neuchâtel [Berthier], afterward commandant at Rouen and an Ultra about 1825).

I had also the good fortune to hit a banknote at Vienna, in the Prater, in the duel which was patched up with M. Raindre, a colonel or major in the light artillery. This bravo, the hero of a hundred duels, was not very brave.

In fact, I have worn a sword all my life without knowing how to use it. I have always been fat, and easily lost my breath. My plan has always been: "Are you ready?" and straight away the seagoon.

At the time when I used to fence with César Pascal, Félix Faure, Duchesne, Casimir Périer, and two or three other Dauphiné men, I went to see "Milord" Périer (in Dauphiné we drop the "Monsieur" when there is a nickname). I found him in an apartment in one of his fine houses of the Feuillants (near where the rue de Castiglione is today); he lived in one of the apartments which he could not let. He was the gayest of misers and the best of company. He came out with me, wearing a blue coat which had a russet stain on the tails eight inches across.

I could not understand how this man who seemed so charming (almost like my cousin Rebuffel) could let his sons Casimir and Scipion starve. The house of Périer used to receive the savings of servants, bailiffs, and small landowners at five per cent; these were sums of 500, 800, and rarely of 1,500 francs. When the assignats came, and for a louis d'or one received a hundred francs, they paid off all these poor devils; many of them hanged or drowned themselves.

My family considered this an infamous proceeding. It does not surprise me in merchants, but once they had made millions, why not have found an honorable pretext for paying off these servants?

My family were perfectly honorable in money matters; they found it hard to tolerate one of our relations who paid off in assignats a sum of eight or ten thousand francs, lent to his clients in Law's banknotes (from 1718, I think, to 1793).



CHAPTER XLIII

I should simply be writing a novel if I tried to note down here the impression which things made on me in Paris, an impression which was greatly modified later.

I do not know whether I have said that, at my father's request, M. Daru took me to two or three of those literary societies his presidentship of which gave his father so much pleasure. I admired there the figure, and especially the bust, of Mme Pipelet, the wife of a poor devil of a surgeon who operated for hernia. I knew her slightly afterward in the character of a princess.

M. Daru recited his poetry with a simplicity which struck me as very strange, with his severe, excited face; I looked at him in astonishment. I said to myself: "I ought to imitate him"; but I felt no desire to do so.

I remember the profound boredom of the Sundays. I used to walk about at random; so this was the Paris for which I had longed so much! The absence of mountains and woods made me sad at heart.

Woods were intimately associated with my dreams of tender and devoted love, like that in Ariosto. All the men seemed to me prosaic and low in the ideas which they had of love and literature. I was careful not to confide my objections to Paris to anybody. And thus it came about that I did not notice that the center of Paris is only an hour away from a beautiful forest, the haunt of stags in royal days. What would not have been my ecstasy, in 1800, at the sight of the Forest of Fontainebleau, where there are a few little miniature rocks, the woods of Versailles, Saint-Cloud, etc.! Probably I should have found these woods too much like a garden.

The question arose of appointing assistants to the Commissaries of War. I became aware of this from the redoubling of Mme Cardon's attentions to the Daru family, and even to me. M. Daru passed a morning with the Minister over the report on this matter.

My anxiety has fixed in my memory a picture of the office in which I waited for the result. I had changed my office; my table was placed in a very big room occupied by a number of clerks. M. Daru followed the line DD' on his way back from seeing the Minister; it seems to me that he had had Cardon and Barthomeuf appointed. I was not jealous of Cardon, but I was of Barthomeuf, from whom I had an aversion. While waiting for the decision, I had written on my blotting-pad: BAD RELATION, in capital letters.

Note that M. Barthomeuf was an excellent clerk, all of whose letters M. Daru would sign (that is to say, M. Barthomeuf would send up twenty letters, of which M. Daru would sign a dozen, correct and sign seven or eight, and send back one or two to be rewritten).

He would barely sign half of mine, and such letters at that! But M. Barthomeuf had the nature and appearance of a grocer's assistant, and except for the Latin authors, which he knew in the same way as he knew the pay regulations, he was incapable of saying a word on the relations of literature with the nature of man, and the way in which he is affected by it.

For my part, I understood perfectly the way in which Helvétius explains Regulus, and I used to make, all by myself, a number of applications in this style; I was far beyond Cailhava in the art of comedy, etc., and it was upon this that I based my belief that I was the superior, or at least the equal, of M. Barthomeuf.

M. Daru ought to have had me appointed and then made me work hard. But chance has led me by the hand in five or six of the great circumstances of my life. Really, I owe a little statue to *Fortune*. It was a great

piece of good fortune not to be made an assistant with Cardon. But I did not think so; I sighed a little as I looked at his fine gold-laced uniform, his hat and sword. But I had not the least feeling of jealousy. Apparently I realized that I did not have a mother like Mme Cardon. I had seen her importune M. Daru (Pierre) in a way that would have made the most phlegmatic man impatient. M. Daru did not lose his temper, but his wild-boar's eyes were a picture. At last he said to her before me: "Madame, I have the honor to promise you that if there are any assistants, your son shall be one."

Mme Cardon's sister was, as it seems to me, Mme Augué des Portes, whose daughters became intimate friends of Citizen Hortense Beauharnais. These young ladies had been educated by Mme Campan, the fellow waiting-woman and probably the friend of Mme Cardon.

I used to laugh and show off my amiable temper in 1800 with the Mlles Augué, one of whom soon afterward, as it seems to me, married Marshal Ney.

I found them gay, and I was—I must have been—a queer creature; perhaps these young ladies were clever enough to see that I was odd but not *undistinguished*. At any rate, I do not know why, but I was well received. What an admirable *salon* to cultivate! This is what old M. Daru ought to have explained to me. This truth, which is fundamental in Paris, I caught a glimpse of only twenty-seven years later, after the famous Battle of San Remo. Fortune, to which I have so much reason to be thankful, has led me into many of the most influential *salons*. I refused in 1814 a post worth millions; in 1828 I was on intimate terms in society with MM. Thiers (now Minister for Foreign Affairs), Mignet, Aubernon, and Béranger. I was treated with great consideration in this *salon*. I found M. Aubernon boring, Mignet lacking in wit, Thiers too assured and talkative; the only one I liked was Béranger; but so as not to ap-

pear to pay court to him, I did not go and see him in prison, and I let Mme Aubernon take a dislike to me as an immoral man.

And the Comtesse Bertrand, in 1809 and 1810! How lacking in ambition I was, or, rather, how lazy!

I have little regret for my lost opportunity. Instead of ten thousand a year, I should have twenty thousand; instead of a Chevalier of the Legion of Honor, I should be an Officer; but I should have spent three or four hours a day over those low devices of ambition, which are dignified by the name of policy. I should have done many little mean tricks, I should be Prefect of Le Mans (in 1814 I was on the point of being appointed Prefect of Le Mans).

The only thing I regret is not having spent my life in Paris; but I should have been tired of Paris by 1836, just as I am tired of my isolation among the savages of Civit -Vecchia.

Taking it on the whole, I do not regret anything but not having invested the gratuities I received from Napoleon, about 1808 and 1809.

All the same, from his point of view old M. Daru was wrong not to say to me:

"You ought to try and make yourself agreeable to Mme Cardon and her nieces the Mlles Augu . With their influence, you will be made a Commissary of War two years earlier. Never breathe a word, even to M. Daru, of what I have just said to you. Remember that you will get promotion only by means of the *salons*. Work hard in the mornings, and in the evenings cultivate the *salons*; it is my business to direct you. For instance, win yourself credit for assiduity; begin with that. Never miss one of Mme Cardon's Tuesdays!"

All this talk would have been necessary to penetrate the understanding of a madman who thought more about *Hamlet* and the *Misanthrope* than about real life.

When I was bored in a *salon*, I used to miss the next week, and appeared again only at the end of a fortnight.

Added to the frankness of my glance, and the utter misery and prostration of my faculties which boredom causes me, you can see how much these absences were likely to advance my prospects. Besides, I always called a fool a fool. This mania brought me a *world of enemies*. Since I have been a wit (in 1826), epigrams have crowded into my head, and those "sayings which cannot be forgotten," as good Mme Mérimée said to me one day. I ought to have been killed ten times, and yet I have only three wounds, two of which are mere flea-bites (in the left hand and foot).

The *salons* I frequented from December 1799 to April 1800 were those of Mme Cardon, Mme Rebuffel, Mme Daru, M. Rebuffel, Mme Sorel (I think), whose husband had acted as my escort on my journey to Paris. They were pleasant, obliging, helpful people who took a minute interest in my affairs, and even cultivated me on account of the influence of M. Daru (the Count), which was already remarkable. They used to bore me, for they were not in the least romantic or literary; I dropped them in fine style.

My cousins, Martial and Daru (the Count), had fought in the war in the Vendée. I have never met people more completely untainted by all patriotic sentiment; and yet they had run the risk of assassination twenty times, at Rennes, at Nantes, and in the whole of Brittany. And so they did not adore the Bourbons, but spoke of them with the respect due to misfortune, and Mme Cardon used to tell us approximately the truth about Marie Antoinette: that she was kind, narrow-minded, and haughty, and very much a woman of pleasure, who used to make great fun of the journeyman locksmith named Louis XVI, so different from the charming Comte d'Artois. That, as for the rest, Versailles was the Court of the King of Misrule, where nobody, except perhaps Louis XVI—and even he only rarely—ever made a promise or took an oath to the people except with the intention of violating it.

I seem to remember that we heard read in Mme Cardon's *salon* the *Memoirs* of her fellow waiting-woman Mme Campan, which were very different from the inept homily printed about 1820. Many a time we did not cross the street again till two in the morning; I was in congenial surroundings, I, who adored Saint-Simon, and I talked in a way that formed a striking contrast with my habitual silliness and over-excitement.

I adored Saint-Simon in 1800 as I do in 1836. Spinach and Saint-Simon have been my only lasting tastes; though after them came that of living in Paris with an income of a hundred louis and writing books. Félix Faure reminded me in 1829 that I used to talk to him like this in 1798.

The Daru family were at first entirely taken up by the decree on the organization of the corps of inspectors of reviews, a decree frequently amended, as it seems to me, by M. Daru (the Count); and, afterward, by the appointment of the Comte Daru and Martial. The former was an inspector and the latter an under-inspector of reviews, both of them in gold-laced hats and red coats. This fine uniform shocked the military, though they were far less vain in 1800 than two or three years later, when merit had been turned to ridicule.

I think I have given a definite impression of my first stay in Paris, from November 1799 to April or May 1800; I have even been too garrulous, and there will be things to strike out. With the exception of Cardon's fine uniform (with gold embroidery on the collar), Fabien's fencing-rooms, and my lime trees at the end of the garden at the War Office, all the rest appears, as it were, only through a cloud. No doubt I often saw Mante, but I have no recollection of it. Was it then that Grand-Dufay died at the Café de l'Europe on the boulevard du Temple, or in 1803? I cannot say.

At the War Office, MM. Barthomeuf and Cardon were assistant-commissaries, and I was very huffy and very ridiculous, no doubt, in M. Daru's eyes. For I was

really incapable of composing a letter of any importance. Martial, though an excellent fellow, was always on chaffing terms with me, and never made me realize that, as a clerk, I had no common sense. He was entirely taken up with his love-affairs with Mme Lavalette and Mme Petiet, about whom his sober brother, the Comte Daru, had made a fool of himself many times. He aspired to touching this unkind fairy's heart by his poetry. I knew all this some months later.

All these things, which were so novel to me, were cruelly distracting to my ideas on literature or on passionate and romantic love; the two were the same to me at that time. On the other hand, my horror of Paris grew less, but I was absolutely mad; what seemed true to me in this sphere one day seemed false to me on the morrow. My judgment was absolutely the sport of my emotions. But at least I never confided in anybody.

For thirty years I had forgotten this absurd period of my first visit to Paris; knowing on the whole that it was of trifling importance, I did not let my thoughts dwell on it. It is barely a week since I started thinking of it again, and if there is any prejudice in what I write, it is against the Brulard of those days.

I do not know whether it was during the first visit that I used to cast loving glances at Mme Rebuffel and her daughter, and whether we had the grief of losing Mme Cambon while I was at Paris. I remember only that Mlle Adèle Rebuffel used to relate to me some extraordinary details about Mlle Cambon, whose companion and friend she had been. Mlle Cambon, having a dowry of twenty-five or thirty thousand francs in the funds, which was a most enormous sum at the end of the Revolution, suffered the fate of all those whose position is too favorable: she was the victim of the most stupid ideas. I suppose that they ought to have married her at sixteen, or at least have made her take a great deal of exercise.

I do not retain the slightest recollection of my departure for Dijon and the army of reserve; my excessive joy has swallowed up everything. MM. Daru (the Count), then inspector of reviews, and Martial, the under-inspector, had gone before me.

Cardon did not come so soon, his clever mother wishing him to get another step. He soon arrived at Milan as aide-de-camp to Carnot, the Minister for War. Napoleon had employed this great citizen to *use him up* (i.e., to make him unpopular or ridiculous if he could. Carnot soon relapsed into an honorable poverty of which Napoleon was not ashamed till 1810, when he was no longer afraid of him).

I have no ideas on my arrival at Dijon any more than on my arrival at Geneva. My impression of these two towns has been effaced by the much more complete impressions left by my later visits. No doubt I was mad with joy. I had with me thirty or so stereotyped volumes. The idea of progress in this *new invention* made me adore these volumes. I am very sensitive to sensations of smell, and used to spend my life washing my hands after reading an old book; and the nasty smell of them had given me a prejudice against Dante and the fine editions of him collected by my poor mother, the idea of whom was still dear and sacred to me, and about 1800 was still in the forefront of my thoughts.

On arriving at Geneva (I had a wild enthusiasm for the *Nouvelle Héloïse*), my first excursion was to the old house where J. J. Rousseau was born in 1712, which I found in 1833 changed into a splendid house, a perfect picture of utility and commerce.

At Geneva there was a shortage of stagecoaches. I found the beginnings of the disorder which seemed to prevail in the army. I had an introduction to somebody, apparently a French Commissary of War, who had been left there to supervise travel arrangements and transport. The Comte Daru had left behind a sick horse; I waited for its recovery.

There at last my memories begin again. After many delays, one morning about eight o'clock they strapped my enormous portmanteau onto this young Swiss horse of a light bay, and a little outside the Lausanne gate I got on horseback.

It was only the second or third time in my life. Séraphie and my father had constantly opposed my learning to ride, fence, etc.

This horse, which had not been out of the stables for a month, bolted after twenty yards, left the road, and dashed into a field planted with willows, in the direction of the lake; I believe the portmanteau was grazing him.



CHAPTER XLIV

I was dying of fright, but the sacrifice had been made; the greatest dangers were powerless to stop me. I looked at my horse's shoulders, and the three feet which separated me from the ground seemed to me a bottomless precipice. As a climax of absurdity, I believe I was wearing spurs.

My spirited young horse was galloping, then, at random in the midst of these willows when I heard my name called; it was Captain Burelviller's sensible, prudent servant, who called out to me to tighten the reins, and at last managed to come up to me and stop the horse, after at least a quarter of an hour's galloping in every direction. It seems to me that among my innumerable fears was that of being swept into the lake.

"What do you want?" I said to this manservant, when he had at last succeeded in calming my horse.

"My master wishes to speak to you."

I at once thought of my pistols: "It is doubtless someone who wants to arrest me." The road was full of people passing by, but all my life I have seen my idea and not the reality (like a *nervous horse*, as the Comte de Tracy said to me seventeen years later).

I came proudly back to the Captain, who, I found, had obligingly halted on the high road.

"What is your business with me, Monsieur?" I said, ready to fire off my pistol.

The Captain was a tall, fair man, neither old nor young, with a sly, rascally look, and nothing engaging about him; far from it. He explained to me that, as he

went through the gates, M. — had said to him:

“There is a young man there going to join the army, on that horse, who is on horseback for the first time and has never seen the army. Be charitable and take him with you for the first few days.”

Still expecting to lose my temper and thinking of my pistols, I looked at Captain Burelviller's straight, immensely long saber; it seems to me that he belonged to the heavy cavalry: blue coat, silver buttons and epaulets.

I believe that, as the height of absurdity, I had a saber; in fact, when I think of it, I am sure I had.

So far as I can judge, this M. Burelviller liked me; he looked a thorough blackguard, who had perhaps been turned out of one regiment and was trying to get back into another. But all this is conjectural, like the faces of the people whom I knew in Grenoble before 1800. How could I have judged?

M. Burelviller answered my questions, and taught me to ride. We traveled this stage together and went and took our billeting-tickets together; and this went on as far as the Casa d'Adda, Porta Nova, at Milan (on the left as you approach the gate).

I was absolutely intoxicated, mad with happiness and joy. Here begins a period of enthusiasm and perfect happiness. My joy and enchantment became a little less only when I became a dragoon in the 6th Regiment, and even then it was only a temporary eclipse.

I did not think then that I was at the highest point of happiness which a mortal can find in this world.

But, none the less, such was the truth. And this, four months after I had been so unhappy in Paris, when I perceived, or thought I perceived, that Paris was not in itself the summit of happiness.

How shall I give an idea of my ecstasy at Rolle?

I shall perhaps have to re-read and correct this passage, which is opposed to my plan, for fear of lying with artifice, like Jean Jacques Rousseau.

As the sacrifice of my life to my fortune was already

made and completed, I was very bold on horseback; but though I was bold, I kept asking Captain Burelviller: "Am I going to kill myself?"

Luckily my horse was Swiss and as pacific and reasonable as a Swiss; if he had been Roman and treacherous, he would have killed me a hundred times.

Apparently M. Burelviller liked me, and he set himself to form me in every way; and from Geneva to Milan, during a journey of four to five leagues a day, he was to me what an excellent tutor must be to a young prince. Our life was one pleasant conversation, mingled with events of a singular and sometimes mildly perilous nature; consequently the remotest appearance of boredom was impossible. I did not dare to talk about my chimerical ideas or talk literature to this experienced libertine of twenty-eight or thirty, who seemed the very opposite of anything emotional.

As soon as we arrived at our halting-place, I would leave him, giving a good tip to his servant for looking after my horse; then I could go away and dream in peace.

It was at Rolle, it seems to me, where we had arrived early, that, intoxicated with happiness, with reading the *Nouvelle Héloïse*, and with the idea of passing through Vevey—perhaps mistaking Rolle for Vevey—I suddenly heard the majestic bell of a church situated up the hillside a quarter of a league above Rolle or Nyon, ringing at full peal; I went up there, I saw the beautiful lake stretched at my feet, the sound of the bell was an exquisite music which formed the accompaniment to my ideas and colored them with the sublime.

There, it seems to me, was the closest approach which I have made to *perfect happiness*.

For such a moment, it is worth while to have lived

Later on I shall speak of similar moments, in which the substance, so far as happiness is concerned, was perhaps real; but was the sensation equally lively, was the transport of happiness equally perfect?

What can I say of such a moment, without lying, without falling into the style of a novel?

At Rolle or Nyon, I do not know which (I must verify this; it is easy to see this church, surrounded with eight or ten great trees), at Rolle precisely began the happy days of my life. It might have been then the 8th or 10th of May 1800.

My heart still beats as I write this, thirty-six years later. I get up from my paper, I wander about my room, and I return to my writing. I had rather miss some touch of truth than fall into the execrable fault of writing mere declamation, as is the custom now.

At Lausanne, I think, M. Burelviller was pleased with me. A retired Swiss captain, still young, was the municipal officer. He was some Ultra who had escaped from Spain or some other Court. In the course of discharging his unpleasant task of distributing billeting-tickets to those ruffians of Frenchmen, he fell foul of us and went so far as to say, alluding to the *honor* which we had to serving our country: "If it is an honor . . ."

My memory no doubt exaggerates his expression.

My hand went to my saber, and I wanted to draw; which proves to me that I had a saber.

M. Burelviller restrained me.

"It is late, the town is crowded, our business is to find a billet," he said to me shortly after.

And we left the municipal officer, the retired captain, after speaking our minds to him.

The next day, as we were riding along the road to Villeneuve, M. Burelviller questioned me about my skill at fencing.

He was thunderstruck when I admitted to him my complete ignorance. It seems to me that the first time we stopped to let our horses ease themselves, he made me get on guard.

"What would you have done, then, if that dog of an aristocrat had come out with us?"

"I should have fallen on him suddenly."

Apparently this remark was spoken just as I felt it.

Captain Burelviller had a high esteem for me after that, and told me so.

My perfect ignorance and complete freedom from lies must have been very obvious to give worth to what would, in any other position, have been an absolutely gross piece of pretense.

He began to ground me a little in the principles of the thrust in the evenings, during our halts.

"Otherwise you will get spitted like a—"

I have forgotten the term of comparison.

Martigny, I think it was, at the foot of the great Saint Bernard, has left me a remembrance: the handsome General Marmont, in the uniform of a counselor of state, sky-blue embroideries on royal blue, engaged in sending off a park of artillery. But how can such a uniform have been possible? I do not know, but I can still see it.

Perhaps I saw General Marmont in the uniform of a general and have since connected him with the uniform of a counselor of state. (He is at Rome, near here, in March 1836, the traitor Duke of Ragusa,¹ in spite of the lie which Lieutenant General Després told me in front of my fire, where I am writing now, not twelve days ago.)

General Marmont was on the left side of the road about seven o'clock in the morning, as we left Martigny. It might have been the 12th or 14th of May 1800.

I was as gay and active as a young colt; I considered myself like Calderon during his campaign in Italy; I looked upon myself as an inquirer detailed to the army for purposes of observation, but destined to write comedies, like Molière. If I got employment later, it would

¹ "The traitor Duke of Ragusa": Marshal Marmont, Napoleon's most trusted general, whose action in 1814 in concluding a secret convention with the Allies, on the ground that further resistance was hopeless, was the last blow to Napoleon's hopes

be in order to live, since I was not rich enough to roam the world at my own expense. I wanted nothing better than to witness great events. So it was with even more joy than usual that I examined Marmont, that handsome young favorite of the First Consul.

As the Swiss in whose houses we had lodged at Lausanne, Villeneuve, Sion, etc., had drawn us a villainous picture of the Great Saint Bernard, I was gayer than ever; "gayer" is not the word: I was happier. My pleasure was so keen, so intimate, that it became pensive in consequence.

Without explaining it to myself, I was extremely sensitive to the beauty of landscapes. As my father and Séraphie, like the true hypocrites that they were, were always extolling natural beauties, I believed that I had a horror of nature. If anyone had talked to me about the beauties of Switzerland, he would have made me sick; I used to skip phrases of that sort in Rousseau's *Confessions* and *Héloïse*, or rather, to be accurate, I skimmed as I read. But these beautiful phrases touched me in spite of myself.

I must have found the greatest possible pleasure in ascending the Saint Bernard, but I vow that if it had not been for Captain Burelville's precautions, which often seemed to me excessive and almost ridiculous, I should perhaps have been killed at the very outset.

Let my reader kindly recall my utterly ridiculous education. To prevent me from running any risks, my father and Séraphie had not allowed me to ride, or, so far as they could help it, to go hunting. The most I could do was to go out with a rifle, but never on a proper hunting-expedition, where one experiences hunger, rain, and excessive fatigue.

What is more, nature has given me the delicate nerves and sensitive skin of a woman. A few months later I could not hold my saber for two hours without having my hand covered with blisters. On the Saint Bernard, so far as physique was concerned, I was like a young

girl of fourteen; I was seventeen and three months, but never had the spoiled son of a great nobleman been more delicately bred.

Military courage, in the eyes of my relations, was a quality belonging to the Jacobins; they valued no courage but that of the days before the Revolution, which had won the Cross of Saint-Louis for the head of the rich branch of the family (Captain Beyle, of Sassenage).

Except for my moral qualities, then, which I had drawn from the books prohibited by Séraphie, I arrived at the Saint Bernard a complete milksop. What would have become of me if it had not been for my meeting with M. Burelville, and if I had traveled alone? I had money, but had not even dreamed of engaging a servant. With my head turned by my delightful reveries, based on Ariosto and the *Nouvelle Héloïse*, all counsels of prudence glanced off me; I considered them bourgeois, groveling, and odious.

Hence my distaste, even in 1836, for comic situations, in which a low character is necessarily bound to occur. They cause me a disgust which verges on horror.

A funny state of mind for a successor of Molière!

So, then, all the wise advice of the Swiss hotel-keepers had glanced off me.

At a certain height the cold became stinging, a penetrating mist surrounded us, and snow had for some time covered the road. This road, a little track between two walls of stones without mortar, was filled with eight or ten inches of melting snow, on top of which were rolling stones (like those at Claix, irregular polygons whose angles are a little blunted).

From time to time a dead horse would cause mine to rear; what was far worse, he soon ceased even to rear. On the whole, he was a sorry brute.



CHAPTER XLV

Every moment matters became worse. For the first time, I found danger. The danger was not very great, it must be confessed, but for a young miss of fourteen who had not been drenched through with rain ten times in her life!

The danger, then, was not great, but it was in myself: circumstances dwarfed the man.

I am not ashamed to do myself this justice, that I was constantly gay. If I mused, it was on the phrases by which J. J. Rousseau might describe these beetling mountains, covered with snow and soaring up to the heavens, with their peaks forever obscured by the rapid drift of great gray clouds.

My horse looked as if he would fall, the Captain swore and was gloomy, his prudent servant, who had become my friend, was very pale.

I was soaked through with the damp; we were constantly obstructed, and even stopped dead, by groups of fifteen and twenty soldiers who were on the way up.

Instead of the sentiments of heroic friendship which I ascribed to them, in accordance with my six years of heroic reverie based on the characters of Ferragus and Rinaldo, I had an impression of sour, ill-natured egoists; they often swore at us, out of rage at seeing us on horseback when they were on foot. A little more, and they would have stolen our horses.

This view of the human character vexed me, but I very soon set it aside in order to enjoy this idea: "So I am witnessing something difficult!"

I do not recall all this, but I recall the later dangers far better, when I was much nearer 1800; for instance, at the end of 1812, on the march from Moscow to Königsberg.

At last, after an infinite amount of zigzagging, which seemed to me to mount up to an infinite height, I perceived on the left, in a remote corner, between two enormous pointed rocks, a low-built house, almost covered by a passing cloud.

It is the Hospice! They gave us, as they did to all the army, half a glass of wine, which seemed to me as icy as a chemist's red draught.

I can remember nothing but the wine; no doubt they added to it a bit of bread and cheese.

It seems to me that we went in, or else the descriptions of the inside of the Hospice which people wrote to me produced a picture which for thirty-six years has taken the place of the reality.

Here is a danger of lying which I have perceived during the three months that I have been thinking about this veracious journal.

For instance, I can quite well call up before me the descent. But I do not wish to hide the fact that five or six years later I saw an engraving which I thought very like it; and now my memory is nothing but the engraving.

That is the danger of buying engravings of fine pictures which one has seen on one's travels. Soon the engraving forms the whole resemblance, and destroys the real memory.

This is what has happened to me in the case of the Madonna of San Sisto at Dresden. Müller's fine engraving has destroyed it for me, whereas I can perfectly well visualize the bad pastels of Mengs in the same gallery in Dresden, of which I have nowhere seen an engraving.

I can see quite well my annoyance at leading my horse by the bridle: the path was formed of unyielding rocks.

The devil of it was that my horse's four feet met in

the straight line formed by the fissure between the two rocks which formed the road, and then the poor brute seemed as if it would fall; on the right, it would not have mattered much, but on the left! What would M. Daru say if I lost his horse for him? Besides, all my possessions were in the enormous portmanteau, and perhaps the greater part of my money.

The captain was swearing at his servant, who was hurting his second horse. He struck his own horse over the head with a stick. He was a very violent man, and, at any rate, he did not trouble about me the least little bit in the world.

To put the finishing touch to our misery, as it seems to me, a cannon came along past us, and we had to make our horses jump to the right side of the road; but I could not swear to this circumstance; it is in the engraving.

I well remember the long circular descent round that devilish frozen lake.

At last, toward Etrouble, or before Etrouble, near a hamlet called Saint- —, nature began to become less austere.

It was a delightful sensation for me.

I said to Captain Burelviller: "Is the Saint Bernard no more than that?"

It seems to me that he lost his temper and thought I was lying (or, in the terms which we employed, that I was "letting off a piece of bluff").

I seem to distinguish among my recollections that he called me a conscript, which struck me as an insult.

At Etrouble, where we slept, or at Saint- —, my happiness was extreme, but I began to understand that it was only in moments when the Captain was gay that I could venture my remarks.

I said to myself: "I am in Italy"—that is to say, in the land of La Zuletta, whom J. J. Rousseau found at Venice, in Piedmont, in the land of Mme Bazile.

I well understood that these ideas were even more

contraband with the Captain, who, it seems to me, had once alluded to Rousseau as a scamp of a writer.

I should be obliged to write like a novel, and try to picture to myself what a young man of seventeen, wild with happiness at escaping from his monastery, must feel, if I wished to speak of my sentiments at Etrouble, at the fortress of Bard.

I have forgotten to say that I brought my innocence with me from Paris; it was only at Milan that I was to get rid of this treasure. What is funny about it is that I cannot remember distinctly with whom I did so.

The violence of my shyness and of the sensation has absolutely killed my recollection.

As we went on our way, the Captain gave me lessons in riding, and, to press on, he would hit his horse over the head with a stick, which made it bolt. Mine was a spiritless, prudent brute; I used to rouse it by applying the spur hard. Fortunately, it was very strong.

My wild imagination, not daring to tell the Captain its secrets, made me at least press him with questions about horsemanship.

"And when a horse backs, and so draws near to a deep ditch, what ought one to do?"

"The devil! You can hardly keep your seat, and you ask me things which embarrass the best riders!"

No doubt some round oath accompanied this answer, for it remains graven upon my memory.

I must have been a terrible nuisance to him. His wise servant warned me that he gave his own horses at least half the bran which he made me buy to *refresh* mine. This good servant offered to change and become my servant; he could have done what he liked with me, whereas the terrible Burelviller used to bully him.

This fine speech made no impression upon me. It seems to me that I thought I owed the Captain an unbounded gratitude.

Besides, I was so happy gazing at the beautiful landscapes and the triumphal arch of April that I had only

one prayer to make—namely, that this life might last forever.

We believed that the army was forty leagues ahead of us.

All of a sudden we found it, checked by the fortress of Bard.¹

I can see myself bivouacking half a league from the fortress, to the left of the high road.

The next day I had twenty-two gnat-bites on my face, and one eye entirely closed. Here narrative has become confounded with memory.

It seems to me that we were held up for two or three days below Bard.

I dreaded the nights because of the bites of these horrible gnats; I had time to half-recover from them.

Was the First Consul with us?

Was it, as it seems to me, while we were in this little plain, beneath the fort, that Colonel Dufour tried to take it by storm? And that two sappers tried to cut the chains of the drawbridge? Did I see the cannon wheels muffled with straw, or is it a memory of what I was told, that I find in my head?

The terrific cannonade among these high rocks, in such a narrow valley, drove me wild with emotion.

At last the Captain said to me: "We are going to pass by over a mountain to the left: this is the way."

I have since learned that this mountain is called Albarredo.

Half a league farther on, I heard this advice being passed from mouth to mouth: "Hold your horses' bridles with only two fingers of your right hand, so that if they fall over the precipice, they do not drag you with them."

"The devil! So there is danger, then!" I said to myself.

¹ Here the unexpectedly strong resistance of this small fort delayed Napoleon's Army of Reserve in May 1800, after it had crossed the Saint Bernard to relieve Masséna in northern Italy. The army was delayed for several days and the artillery had to be left behind.

We halted on a little platform.

"Ah! they are aiming at us," said the Captain.

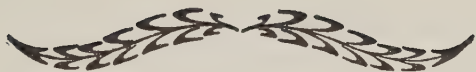
"Are we within range?" I said to the Captain.

"So my fine fellow is already afraid?" he said in a tone of annoyance. There were seven or eight persons present.

This remark was like the crowing of the cock to Saint Peter. I see it all again. I went nearer to the edge of the platform so as to be more exposed, and when he continued the march I loitered a few minutes to show my courage.

And this is how I was under fire for the first time.

It was a kind of virginity which was as irksome to me as the other.



CHAPTER XLVI

In the evening, when I came to think it over, I could not get over my astonishment. "What! is it nothing but that?" I said to myself.

This rather fatuous astonishment and this exclamation have followed me all my life. I think that this is due to my imagination; I make this discovery, like many others, in 1836, as I write this.

Parenthesis: I often say to myself, but without regret: "How many splendid opportunities I have missed! I might be rich, or at least I might be comfortably off!" But I see, in 1836, that my greatest pleasure is *dreaming*; but dreaming of what? Often of things which bore me. The active steps which it is necessary to take in order to amass an income of ten thousand francs are impossible to me. Besides, one has to flatter, to try not to offend anybody, etc. The latter of these is almost impossible to me.

Well, well! The Comte de Cauchain was a lieutenant or sub-lieutenant in the 6th Dragoons at the same time as I was. He had the reputation of being a clever schemer, losing no opportunity of pleasing influential people, etc., never taking a step without some aim in view, etc. His uncle, General Cauchain, had pacified the Vendée, I think, and was not without influence. M. de Cauchain left the regiment to enter the consular service; he had probably all the qualities which I lack; but he is consul at Nice just as I am at Cività-Vecchia. This ought to comfort me for not being a schemer, or at least skillful, prudent, etc. I have had the rare pleasure of

doing, on the whole, what I liked all my life, and I have got on as well as a cool-headed, calculating man. M. de Cauchain made himself agreeable to me when I went through Nice in December 1833. Perhaps he has the advantage over me in point of fortune, but he probably inherited it from his uncle, and, besides, he is burdened with an old woman. I would not change with him; I mean to say, I should not wish my soul to pass into his body.

So I ought not to complain of my fate. I had a loathsome time from seven to seventeen, but since my passage of the Saint Bernard (2,491 meters above sea-level) I have had no reason to complain of my destiny; on the contrary, I have reason to congratulate myself upon it.

In 1804 I longed for a hundred louis and my liberty; in 1836 I passionately long for six thousand francs and my liberty. Anything beyond that would do very little for my happiness. This does not mean that I should not like to have the handling of twenty-five thousand francs and my liberty, so as to have a good carriage with flexible springs, but the pilfering of my coachman would perhaps cause me more annoyance than the carriage would pleasure.

It is my good fortune to have nothing to manage; I should be very unhappy if I had an income of one hundred thousand francs from land and houses. I should very soon sell it all at a loss, or at least three quarters of it, and buy shares. Happiness to me means to give orders to nobody and to take orders from nobody, so I think I did well not to marry Mlle Rietti or Mlle Diane.—End of the parenthesis.

I remember feeling a supreme pleasure on entering Etrouble and Aosta. "What! is the passage of the Saint Bernard *no more than that?*" I said to myself constantly. I was even so mistaken as to say it aloud sometimes, and at last Captain Burelviller gave me a dressing-down; in spite of my innocence, he took it for a piece of bra-

vado. My naïveté has very often produced the same effect.

A ridiculous or even an exaggerated expression has often been enough to spoil the best things for me: for instance, at Wagram, beside the cannon when the grass took fire, that colonel I knew who would always talk big said: "This is a battle of giants!" The impression of grandeur was immediately removed for the whole day.

But, good heavens! who will read this? What a rigmarole! Can I at last get back to my story? Can the reader make out at present whether he is at 1800, a mad young fellow's start in life, or in the middle of the sage reflections of a man of fifty-three!

I remarked, before leaving my rock, that the cannonade of Bard made an appalling din; it was the *sublime*, though a little too nearly allied to danger. The spirit, instead of enjoying pure happiness, was still a little taken up with keeping its equilibrium.

Once and for all, I warn the brave man, the only one, perhaps, who has the courage to read me, that all my fine reflections in this strain date from 1836. I should have been much surprised at them in 1800; perhaps, in spite of being so strong on Helvétius and Shakespeare, I should not have understood them.

I have retained a clear and very serious recollection of the fortifications which were directing this heavy fire at us. The commandant of this little fortress, so "providentially situated," as the good writers of 1836 would say, thought he had brought General Bonaparte to a halt.

I believe we lodged that night with a parish priest, who had already suffered badly from the twenty-five or thirty thousand men who had passed before Captain Burelville and his pupil. The Captain, selfish and ill-natured, would swear; it seems to me that I was sorry for the priest, and talked Latin to him to make him less frightened. It was a great sin; it was a miniature version

of the crime of that vile scoundrel Bourmont at Waterloo.¹ Fortunately, the Captain did not hear me.

The parish priest, in his gratitude, taught me that *donna* meant "woman," *cattiva*, "bad," and that if I wanted to know how many miles there were from here to Ivrea, I should say: "*Quante sono miglia di qua a Ivrea?*"

This was the first beginning of my Italian.

I was so struck by the number of dead horses and other wreckage of the army that I found between Bard and Ivrea, that I have not kept any very distinct recollection of it. It was the first time I experienced the sensation, so often repeated since then, of finding myself between the columns of one of Napoleon's armies. The sensation of the moment was all-absorbing, exactly like my recollection of the first evening when Giul treated me as a lover. My memory is nothing but a romance invented for this occasion.

I can still see the first appearance of Ivrea as I saw it three quarters of a league away, a little to the right, and on the left some distant mountains, perhaps Monte Rosa and the mountains of Biella, perhaps that *rezegon* of *Lebk* which I was to adore so much later.

It became difficult, not to get a billeting-ticket from the terrified inhabitants, but to defend one's billet against the parties of three or four soldiers who roamed about pillaging. I have a kind of impression of taking my saber in hand to defend a door of one house which some light horsemen wanted to carry off to make a bivouac.

In the evening I had a sensation which I shall never forget. I went to the theater, in spite of the Captain, who, having a good notion of my childishness and ignorance of how to defend myself—my saber being too

¹ Marshal Bourmont deserted to the Prussians at the opening of the Waterloo campaign in 1815, when he had been placed in command of a division in the Army of the North.

heavy for me—was no doubt afraid that I should get killed at some streetcorner. I had no uniform, which is the worst position one can be in between two columns of an army. . . .

At any rate, I went to the theater; they were playing Cimarosa's *Matrimonio Segreto*; the actress who took the part of Caroline had lost a front tooth. This is all that remains with me of my divine happiness.

I should be lying and writing like a novel if I undertook to analyze it in detail.

In a moment, my two great deeds, (1) passing the Saint Bernard, (2) having been under fire, disappeared. It all seemed to me coarse and low. I felt something resembling my enthusiasm at the church above Rolle, but much purer and more acute. The pedantry of Julie d'Etange irked me in Rousseau, whereas in Cimarosa everything was divine.

In the intervals of my pleasure, I said to myself: "And here am I embarked on a gross profession, instead of dedicating my life to music."

The reply to this, made without any ill humor, was: "I must live; I am going to see the world and become a brave soldier; and after a year or two I shall return to music, my only love." Such were the high-sounding expressions I used to myself.

My life was made new again, and all the disappointment of my Paris life was buried forever. I had now seen clearly where happiness lay. It seems to me now that my great trouble was this: "I have not found happiness in Paris, where I thought for so long that it was: where is it, then? Can it be in our mountains in Dauphiné? In that case, my parents would be right and I should do better to go back home."

This evening at Ivrea destroyed Dauphiné forever in my mind. If it had not been for the beautiful mountains which I had seen on my arrival in the morning, perhaps our mountains, Berland, Saint-Ange, and Taillefer, would not have been beaten forever.

To live in Italy and hear this music became the basis of all my reflections.

Next morning, as I was walking on beside our horses with the Captain, who was six feet tall, I was childish enough to speak of my happiness. He answered me with gross jests about the easy virtue of actresses. This word was dear and sacred to me, on account of Mlle Kably, and, besides, that morning I was in love with Caroline (in the *Matrimonio Segreto*). It seems to me that we had a serious difference of opinion, with some idea of a duel on my side.

I simply cannot understand my folly; it is like my challenge to the excellent Joinville (now the Baron Joinville, military intendant at Paris); I could not hold my saber up straight.

I made my peace with the Captain; it seems to me that we were thinking about the Battle of the Ticino, in which, it seems to me, we were mixed up, but without any danger. I say no more about it, for fear of romancing; this battle, or combat, was related to me in great detail a few months afterward by M. Guyardet, a major in the 6th or 9th Light Infantry, the same regiment as that of the excellent Macon, who died at Leipzig about 1809, it seems to me. M. Guyardet's story, which he related to Joinville, it seems to me, in my presence, completes my own recollections, and I am afraid of taking the impression of this story for my own memory.

I do not even remember whether the Battle of the Ticino counted in my mind as my second time under fire; in any case, it can have been only cannon fire. Perhaps we were afraid of being sabered, having found ourselves being rounded up by the enemy with some cavalry.

The only thing I can see clearly is the smoke of the cannon, or of rifle fire. Everything is confused.

Except for my state of wild and most acute happiness, I have really nothing to say between Ivrea and Milan.

The sight of the landscape enchanted me. I did not find the realization of the beautiful, but when, after the Ticino and as far as Milan, the denseness of the trees and the vigor of the vegetation, even of the plants of maize, as it seems to me, prevented me from seeing a hundred yards to the right or the left, I found that in this lay beauty.

This is what Milan was to me, and that for twenty years (1800 to 1820). Its adored image is even now scarcely beginning to separate itself from that of the Beautiful. Reason says to me: "But true beauty is Naples and Pansilippo, for instance; it is in the surroundings of Dresden, the leveled walls of Leipzig, the Elbe at Altona, the Lake of Geneva, etc." My reason tells me this, but my heart feels only Milan and the *luxuriant* country which surrounds it.



CHAPTER XLVII

Milan

One morning, on entering Milan, on a charming spring morning—and such a spring! and in what a country of all the world!—I saw Martial three yards away from me, to the left of my horse. It seems to me that I see him still; it was in the *Corsia del Giardino*, a little way after the Strada dei Bigli, at the beginning of the Corsia di Porta Nova.

He was in a long blue coat with the brimmed hat of an adjutant general.

He was very glad to see me.

“We thought you were lost,” he said.

“The horse was sick at Geneva,” I answered; “I did not start till the [1].”

“I will show you our house; it is only a few steps away.”

I saluted Captain Burelviller; I never saw him again.

Martial turned back again and took me to the Casa d’Adda.

The front of the Casa d’Adda was quite unfinished; the greater part of it was then in rough brick, like San Lorenzo in Florence. I entered a magnificent court. I dismounted in great astonishment, admiring everything. I went up a splendid staircase. Martial’s servants unstrapped my portmanteau and led my horse away.

¹ Date missing in original.

I went upstairs with him and soon found myself in a magnificent *salon* overlooking the Corsia. I was enchanted; it was the first time that architecture produced its effect upon me. Soon they brought me some excellent fried cutlets. For many years this dish brought Milan back to me.

This town became to me the most beautiful place on earth. I am not in the least sensitive to the charm of my own country; I have a repulsion which verges on physical nausea for the place where I was born. Milan was for me, from 1800 to 1821, the place where I constantly desired to live.

I passed a few months there in 1800; it was the most splendid time in my life. I returned there as much as I could in 1801 and 1802, when I was in garrison at Brescia and Bergamo; and, finally, I lived there for choice from 1815 to 1821. It is my reason alone which tells me, even in 1836, that Paris is better. About 1803 or 1804, in Martial's study, I used to try not to raise my eyes to an engraving which showed in the distance the Cathedral of Milan; the memory was too tender, and gave me pain.

We might have been at the end of May or the beginning of June when I entered the Casa d'Adda (this word has remained sacred to me).

Martial behaved perfectly to me, and really he has always behaved perfectly. I am annoyed that I did not see this better when he was alive; as he had an astonishing amount of petty vanity, I used to humor this vanity.

But what I used to say to him out of social tact, which I was beginning to understand, and also out of friendship, I ought to have said to him out of warm friendship and gratitude.

He was not romantic, while I carried this weakness to the verge of madness; the absence of this exaltation made him seem dull in my eyes. The romantic element in me extended to love, to courage, to everything. I dreaded the moment when I should have to tip a porter,

for fear that I should not give him enough and should insult his delicacy. It often happened that I had not dared to give a tip to a man who was too well dressed for fear of insulting him, and I must have been considered stingy. It is the opposite fault to that of most of the sub-lieutenants I have known; they used to think how they could cheat anyone out of a tip.

Here was an interval of wild and perfect happiness. I shall no doubt range rather far afield in talking about it. Perhaps I should do better to continue my previous story.

Between the end of May and the months of October and November, when I was accepted as a sub-lieutenant in the 6th regiment of Dragoons at Rapallo or Roncagnago, between Brescia and Cremona, I found five or six months of celestial and perfect happiness.

One cannot see clearly that part of the sky which is too near the sun; and for a similar reason I should have great difficulty in giving a reasonable account of my love for Angela Pietragrua. How can I make at all a reasonable story out of so many follies? Where can I begin? How can I make it at all intelligible? Why, I am already forgetting how to spell, as happens to me in my great transports of passion; and yet I am dealing with things which happened thirty-six years ago.

Be so good as to forgive me, kind reader! Or rather, if you are over thirty, or if, at thirty, you belong to the prosaic party, close the book!

Will it be believed?—but everything in my story of this year 1800 will seem absurd. This heavenly, passionate love, which had rapt me quite away from the earth and transported me to the land of the most delicious dreams, after my own heart's desire, did not arrive at what is called good fortune till September 1811.

No more than that! Eleven years, not of fidelity, but a sort of constancy.

The woman I loved, and by whom I believed myself

to be loved in a sort of way, had other lovers, but she would prefer me, I used to say to myself, if my rank were equal to theirs. I had other mistresses (I have been walking about for a quarter of an hour before writing this). How can I give a reasonable account of those times? I would rather put it off till another day.

If I reduced myself within reasonable limits, I should do too much of an injustice to what I want to relate.

I do not want to say what things were—what I discover they were, for almost the first time, in 1836; but, on the other hand, I cannot write what they were for me in 1800: the reader would throw the book down.

What line can I take? How can one describe a frenzy of happiness?

Has the reader ever been madly in love? Has he ever had the good fortune to pass a night with that mistress whom he has loved the most in his life?

Upon my word, I cannot go on: the subject is too much for the narrator.

I feel quite well that I am ridiculous, or, rather, unbelievable. My hand refuses to write; I will put it off till tomorrow.

Perhaps it would be better to pass clean over these six months.

How can I describe the excess of happiness which everything gave me? It is impossible.

The only thing left for me to do is to make a summary, so as not to interrupt my story entirely.

I am like a painter who has not got the courage to paint one corner of his picture. So as not to spoil the rest, he sketches in roughly what he cannot paint.

Ah, reader, excuse my memory, or, rather, skip fifty years.

This is the summary of what, after an interval of thirty-six years, I cannot relate without spoiling it horribly.

Even if I had to pass in horrible pain the five, ten,

twenty, or thirty years which I have still to live, I could not at this moment say: "I do not want to begin over again."

In the first place, the happiness of having made something of my life. An average man—below the average, if you wish—but kind-hearted and gay, or, rather, happy at that time within himself—with whom I lived.

All these are discoveries which I make as I write. Not knowing how to describe it, I am analyzing what I felt at that time.

I am very old today, the sky is gray, I am not very well.

Nothing can prevent madness.

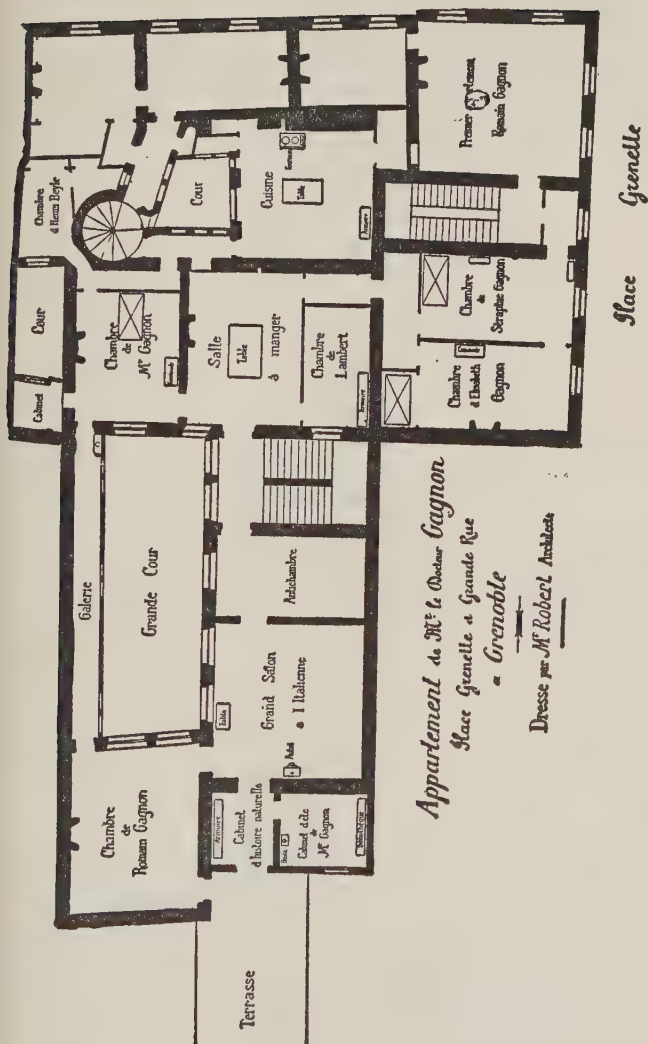
As an honorable man who abhors exaggeration, I do not know what to do.

I am writing this, and I have always written everything as Rossini writes music; I think about it, writing every morning what lies before me in the libretto.

I read in a book which was sent me today:

"This result is not always noticeable to contemporaries, for those who put it into action and experience it; but from a distance, and from the point of view of history, one can observe at what period a people loses its originality of character, etc." (M. Villemain, Preface, page x).

One spoils such tender sentiments by narrating them in detail.



*Appartement de M. le Docteur Gagnon
Place Grenelle à Grande Rue
à Grenoble*

Dressé par M. Robert Architecte

STENDHAL, whose real name was Marie-Henri Beyle (1783-1842), was born in Grenoble and lived most of his adult life in Paris. He wrote biographies of Haydn and Rossini, several popular romantic novels, and two classic novels, The Red and the Black, and The Charterhouse of Parma.

THIS BOOK is set on the linotype in Granjon, a type named in compliment to Robert Granjon, type-cutter and printer—1523 to 1590, Antwerp, Lyons, Rome and Paris. Granjon, the boldest and most original designer of his time, was one of the first to practice the trade of type-founder apart from that of printer. Composed, printed, and bound by THE COLONIAL PRESS INC., Clinton, Massachusetts. Cover design by JEAN CARLU.

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THE LIFE OF HENRI BRULARD

Stendhal's was a genius that matured early, and before he had passed his eighteenth year he had already attained his full intellectual development. In later life his main ideas, which are so sharply defined in all his work, underwent little change, and the stripling who went up to Paris to join the Napoleonic army was already a man full-fledged. It is necessary for any real understanding of his books to appreciate at their true value the forces and events that made him what he was, and it is for this reason that his early formative years are of such immense importance. This explanation he gave us in *Henri Brulard*—a confession as startling in its frankness as it is beautiful in its evocation, in phrases and images at once subtle and precise, of a vanished past.

Stendhal wrote *The Life of Henri Brulard* for his own amusement, in order, as he said, to determine what sort of man he had been in fifty years of intense living. The qualities that made *Le Rouge et le noir* and *La Chartreuse de Parme* the masterpieces they are—his sensitive understanding and precise psychological analysis—were here turned inward upon himself in a style more personal and more passionate than was his usual custom.

A VINTAGE BOOK